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WALTER COLYTON;

A TALE OF 1688.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "BRAMBLETYE HOUSE," &c. &c.

Remember, O my friends! the laws, the rights,
The generous plan of power delivered down,
From age to age, by your renown'd forefathers:
O let it never perish in your hands,
But piously transmit it to your children! CATO.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,
NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1830.

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WALTER COLYTON:

CHAPTER I.

Do not weep. What is it ?

I had spoke at first, but that

I held it most unfit for you to know :—

Faith ! do not know it yet.

Thou seest my love, that will keep company

With thee in tears: hide nothing then from me.

The Maid's Tragedy.

THE Squire had passed so many years in supine indolence and tranquil enjoyment, both of mind and body ; he had been so perfectly indifferent to all the cares and troubles of others, provided his own affairs flourished, and his own personal comforts were secured to him ; he had so long and so completely verified the French-

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man's dictum, that those men pass the most happily through the world, who have a cold heart and a good digestion ; that he hardly knew what to make of his own sensations when he was startled out of his habitual equanimity by this unexpected *bourrasque*. A reflected self-love attached him to his son Walter, not only because he saw in his soldierly and handsome figure a renewal of his own youth, but because he looked forward to the day when he might become his bottle companion, and as staunch a toper as himself. For Edith he had never felt any very warm attachment ; she was too pensive in disposition, and too delicate in health, to please one who had no sympathy with sickness, never being indisposed himself, and who professed an undisguised aversion for a melancholy-looking face. Imminent as they were, therefore, the dangers that threatened Walter and Edith would probably have made little more than a temporary impression upon him ; but when the person that he loved best in the whole world, *videlicet* Jaspar Colyton, was placed in jeopardy ; when, if he even escaped any more

serious infliction, he might be visited with one of those ruinous fines which had lately been imposed upon such people of property as had been convicted of connivance of any sort with the disaffected ; when the consequence of this spoliation might deprive him of some or all of his favourite horses and dogs, of his rare claret, of his noon-day spiced Sherry under the crooked pear-tree, and perhaps even of Orchard Place, his danger presented an accumulation of horrors that quite unmanned him. As a soldier, he had been brave even to rashness, but that was when he had little to lose ; and where life yields us nothing, we are generally ready to sell it for what it brings us in. It is luxury and indulgence that make cowards of us all ; they who have much to hope and to gain are courageous from a natural selfishness ; they who have much to fear and to lose, are, for the same reason, pusillanimous ; a trite truth, because it embodies the history of past nations, and yet an instructive one, because it is equally applicable to those that now exist.

Mean as was the Squire's opinion of his

spouse's judgment, he was yet so little accustomed to exert himself, or even to reflect upon any matters of real moment, that he immediately proceeded to disclose to her the startling tidings he had just heard, and to ask her advice touching the best mode of proceeding.

Poor Mrs. Colyton was at first completely overwhelmed by such an unexpected succession of disastrous intelligence, and sitting with her hands clasped, could for some time do nothing but sigh and groan, and utter ejaculations or scraps of prayer, until she found a consolation, such as it was, in recalling the various omens and prognostics which had for several days past assured her that some signal calamity was impending, and which she had repeatedly pointed out to the attention of Hetty, who could confirm all her assertions. It may be a mistaken weakness, but it is not altogether a useless one, if we can alleviate the blow of misfortune by flattering ourselves that we clearly anticipated it; a proof of foreknowledge which Mrs. Colyton was the more anxious to establish, because her husband was so apt to twit her for her credulity

and superstition. The Squire, however, feeling upon the present occasion no disposition to moot the point of her prophetic powers, observed that there was little satisfaction in her having foreseen their troubles, unless she could have prevented or have guarded against them, and that the only point for their immediate consideration was the course that it would be most prudent to adopt.

“Very true, very true!” said his spouse shaking her head, and sighing, and repeating the words, until as they suggested a new idea, she exclaimed—“But how do we know that all this horrible story of Seagrave’s is true? That rattling, reckless, brazen-faced reprobate was never to be trusted in his assertions, and while he was sitting with you he must have drunk wine enough to make him utter a thousand falsehoods, for I saw Christopher carrying away three empty claret bottles. Oh Jaspar! Jaspar! if you could think of drinking at such a moment, and with such a man, surely you might have given him the elderberry wine. His story may be all an invention trumped up

to frighten us out of Edith and her fortune ; but the knave shall know that he has to deal with a woman, who, in spite of her imputed credulity, is, thank Heaven ! not quite so gullable as her husband, and neither to be hoodwinked by a cheat, nor scared by a bugaboo. Listen to me, and leave me to manage every thing, for in these matters you are quite helpless. You must ride over immediately to Bridgwater—see our poor dear boy, and learn from his own mouth the real state of the case, and in the mean time I will gather from Edith, whose precarious state requires the most delicate and tender treatment, the exact truth respecting the occurrences at Hales Court. When this is done, when we have ascertained the precise dangers that threaten us, we shall know how to deal with Seagrave, who by his own account is an unconscionable rogue—(to think of his swilling our claret in that manner !)—and whom I fear Edith will never be persuaded to accept as a husband.”

“ ‘Sdeath, Becky, this seems to be very sensible advice, and I will order roan Rupert to be

immediately saddled," said the Squire, who was so humbled by his fears, and so conscious of his own inaptitude for thought and exertion in the pending emergency, that he was glad to receive counsel and consolation even from his wife. In pursuance of her suggestions, he accordingly mounted his horse, and rode towards Bridgwater with a heavy heart, conning over in his mind the enormous fines which had been imposed for offences similar to that which was likely to be imputed to himself, and endeavouring to derive a solace from the recollection that Edith's marriage would hush up the whole affair. Of any objections that she might start to an arrangement so vitally important to herself and to her family, he did not for a moment dream.

Without intimating the nature of Seagrave's matrimonial proposition, or hinting at any danger that might accrue from his espionage at Hales Court, Mrs. Colyton guardedly stated to Edith the substance of his communication, beseeching her to confess all that she knew of the transaction in question.

“Has he escaped? Has Stanley Forester got away?” passionately inquired the latter.

“There is every reason to conclude so. He has not been heard of since, and Seagrave says, he possesses such a marvellous property of eluding apprehension and crossing the sea, that he has little doubt of his being at this moment in Holland.”

“Thank God! thank God!” gasped Edith, vehemently clasping her hands together, while her upturned eyes suddenly filled with tears.

“Alas! then you did know that it was Stanley Forester, and you may as well tell me all,” said Mrs. Colyton sorrowfully.

Edith did not long hesitate in complying with her request. Finding longer concealment unavailing, and indeed impossible, she revealed, though not without considerable agitation, every occurrence, justifying the conduct of the Sheltons, in which she had fully participated, by the imperative dictates of Christian humanity; accounting for her silence by her fear of implicating her parents, and avowing her perfect readiness to meet, in her own person, all

the responsibilities she might have incurred, though she hoped they would not extend to others, as she had been the primary cause of introducing the proclaimed outlaw into Hales Court.

“My child ! my dear child !” exclaimed Mrs. Colyton, overwhelmed with fresh grief and consternation at this avowal—“Heaven grant that you may not have bitter occasion to regret your imprudence !—Wretched mother that I am ! both my children at once to be exposed to the vengeance of the law ! Let me sit down in the dust and ashes, and cover myself with sackcloth, for the trials of Job were not more severe than mine.”

“*Both* your children ? has any thing then happened to dear Walter ? Oh, tell me what it is, I beseech, I implore you !”

“As yet we know nothing certain,” said the mother, recalling some portion of self-possession, as she noticed the deep agitation of Edith—“Your father is gone to learn the real nature and extent of the troubles in which his ungovernable temper has involved him, and when he

returns, you shall know all. In the mean time, compose yourself, my dear Edith, and tranquillize, if you can, that throbbing bosom, for hope is still left to us, and sufficient for the hour is the evil thereof.”—So saying, she folded her daughter to her heart, kissed her affectionately, and retired to her apartment, her own bosom much needing that consolation which she had endeavoured to instil into her daughter’s.

The Squire, in the mean time, hastening to Bridgwater, soon ascertained that Walter was really in confinement, and, upon applying to the commanding officer, obtained permission to see him. That it was a most distressing interview for both parties, it is unnecessary to state, and it would have been still more so to the Squire, but that his feelings were to a certain extent neutralized by his still keener fears of trial and confiscation to himself. Walter, from the first moment of his committal to the guard-house, had bitterly and incessantly regretted the burst of passion that had hurried him into such a flagrant breach of discipline ; but as he

saw no possible means of escaping from the consequences of his rashness, he had subsequently submitted to his fate with a sullen, dogged resolution, making no exertions in his own behalf, for he really knew not in what direction his efforts could be rendered available; and abstaining even from writing to his own family, partly from a deep sense of shame, but more from a persuasion that it would be useless to lacerate their feelings, and especially those of Hetty, until his doom was finally ascertained. Nor was he without a vague hope that he might escape the exposure of a public court-martial; that in consideration of his youth and inexperience, of the gross provocation he had received, and of the surprise of his feelings from his rencounter with Seagrave being so totally unexpected, he might be dismissed with a reprimand, or some such slight and unhumiliating punishment, as would not awaken any very poignant regret in the bosom of his friends and relations. These extenuating circumstances, with the expression of the sincerest contrition for his offence, he had stated in a respectful

letter to his Colonel, who called upon him in consequence, and, with much apparent sincerity, regretted his inability to interfere, declaring that the affair had been taken up warmly by General Trevor, a strict disciplinarian, who felt himself personally insulted by the outrage committed in his presence, and who insisted that the court-martial should go forward.

“’Sdeath, my poor unfortunate boy!” cried the Squire upon learning those particulars, “you have nothing to hope from the General, whom I have ever known to be a haughty, stern, and unrelenting man, who never fails in the performance of any military duty himself, and never pardons the omission of it in another. *Mort de ma vie!* I have often quarrelled with a brother officer, and a superior too, but to strike him upon duty! I should as soon have thought of striking a sack of gun-powder with a lighted torch. Had you only waited till the regiment was dismissed for the day, you might have run him through the midriff with perfect safety.”

“It is too late now, Sir, to make this discovery,” said Walter, somewhat impatiently.

“So it is, my dear boy, so it is; and yet, may I die if I can think of any thing that may better stead thee, for I was ever a bad contriver of expedients, and to say the truth, I have been so flustered and flurried this morning, that I feel as if I had got another man’s head upon my shoulders. Hast dreamed of no plot nor plan thyself? Body o’ me, Walter, it is thine own affair, and thou hast had nothing else to do, since thou hast been cooped up here, but to think about it.”

“I have seen the Colonel, as I told you; I have stated to him every thing that occurred to my mind of an exculpatory nature; I shall make the best defence I can when I am put upon my trial, and I know not what farther I can do.”

“Nor I either, nor I either; I am already at my wit’s end, and truly I had not far to travel; but Seagrave has promised to favour you in giving his evidence, and perhaps he may succeed in bringing you off.”

“Seagrave is a false-hearted villain, and I can depend upon nothing except his roguery and his enmity.”

Walter then stated his insidious conduct in the affair of Mrs. Audley, and in spite of his solemn asseverations to the contrary, avowed his unalterable conviction that he was well aware of that lady's real character, and had been specially employed by Lord Sunderland to entrap him into a marriage with her. Upon this subject, and upon the unhappy prospects before them, the conversation was maintained some little time longer, when the Squire took his leave, having arranged nothing, except that a list of the officers of the Court Martial should be transmitted to him on the following day, in order that he might exert his influence in his son's favour, should any of them prove to be personally known to himself or to his friends.

Great was the grief and consternation of both parties, when upon his conferring with Mrs. Colyton, on his return to Orchard Place, it was found that Seagrave's averments were in every respect (either as they pointed to Edith or to

Walter,) fully and fearfully confirmed. The Squire's indignation against his daughter, for his own responsibility predominated over every other consideration, now returned in all its force, and he insisted that Seagrave's proposal should be instantly communicated to her, and that she should be commanded to look upon him as her future husband, the only method by which she could save herself from a capital indictment, and her family from heavy penalties and confiscations, even if they escaped being included with her in the charge of High Treason. This melancholy communication the mother undertook to make, and as Walter's misfortune could now no longer be concealed, for the sitting of the Court Martial would soon publish it throughout the neighbourhood, the Squire went to apprise Mapletoft and Hetty of the fact. Having thus, in some degree, relieved his own mind by discharging his troubles upon others, he bethought him that in the hurry of his departure he had forgotten his customary morning's tankard of warm sherry, an omission which Kit the servant was instantly ordered to

repair, when the comfort-loving Squire, betaking himself to the alcove beneath the crooked pear-tree, endeavoured by the aid of his beverage and his pipe, to quaff and puff away care, a visitant against whom he had ever entertained a mortal antipathy, under whatever form he might approach.

Of Hetty's continued attachment to his son he entertained not the smallest suspicion; indeed it was a consideration that never entered his head, nor was there any thing in her demeanour, when he informed her of Walter's perilous plight, to justify the notion. Unlike the generality of young females in polished life, Hetty possessed a robustness of mental temperament which, instead of exhibiting sudden emotions by screams and faintings, kept its deep feelings to itself, rather seeking relief from consulting its inward thoughts how an impending calamity might be best averted, or from summoning up the fortitude that might most courageously endure it, than by venting itself in external manifestations. Threatened danger of any sort only incited her courageous spirit to confront

and conquer it ; so that, although she was somewhat stunned in the first instance by the magnitude of her lover's peril, she shed no tear, she lost no time in unavailing regrets, but retiring to her apartment, took deliberate counsel of her own heart whether even so humble and powerless a female as herself might not mitigate his sufferings, or render him some essential service in this crisis of his fate. The amount of actual danger was not yet known ; he might be let off, with only a reprimand or some slight infliction, and upon every account, therefore, it was advisable to await the sentence of the Court Martial. But as much might be done to influence their decree, and as she did not consider the Squire to be a very able or executive agent in such matters, she determined to see and consult with Walter herself. Hetty was prompt in every thing ; with her to decide was to act, and thinking that in the present confusion and distress of the family, her temporary absence was less likely to be noticed, she put on her hood and scarf, and instantly set off to walk over to Bridgwater.

Widely different was the effect of Mrs. Colyton's communication to Edith, slowly and guardedly as it was made. Fortunately for the latter, her mind had been so far corroborated in the morning by the announced probability of Forester's escape, in comparison with which her own safety and life seemed to be of trivial importance, that she listened to the first part of her mother's statement without any very vehement emotion; but when she had heard the whole, when she learnt that it was proposed to sacrifice her to Seagrave as the price of his good offices in favour of Walter, and his forbearance from informing against themselves and the Sheltons, her feelings became uncontrollable, and her indignation found vent in a burst of passionate invective—"Oh the base, low-minded, sordid, dastardly villain!" she exclaimed, her usually composed and pale countenance becoming suddenly lighted up and inflamed—"does he hope to obtain my hand, or rather my paltry fortune, for that is his sole object, by this infamous and cowardly menace? and would you, my dearest mother, would

even my bitterest enemy, counsel me to accept a wretch, the very basis of whose proposal is so detestable and unprincipled, that from every brave and honourable mind it must ensure instant rejection? Did I not refuse him before, because I hated him as a drunkard and a loose profligate, and shall I not cast him from me with tenfold scorn and loathing now that he has proved himself in addition to be a spy, an evesdropper, an informer, a poltroon, a trafficker in blood, every thing that is despicable and unmanly? How can I swear to honour and obey such a heartless knave as this? and as to love—Oh horrible, disgusting thought! No! let him do his worst—I despise as much as I abominate and detest him. I dare and defy his utmost malice; I had rather be his victim than his wife, and would perish, ten thousand times over, sooner than submit to his mean and insolent proposals.”

“Alas, my poor Edith! if no person’s safety but your own were concerned you might perhaps deem yourself warranted in running all risks, and in holding this language of defiance;

but consider, that upon your decision in this most momentous affair depends the safety of your generous friends the Sheltons, the life perhaps of your brother, the probable liberty and fortune of your parents."

"It is true—it is true! Gracious Heaven! what will become of me, beset as I am on every side with wretchedness unutterable? Oh my dear mother, do not urge me to desperation, do not counsel me—for I see your secret wishes in your looks, though your tongue hesitates to utter them,—do not counsel me to perjure myself at the altar of the Lord, and sacrifice my immortal soul to preserve this perishable body. You have ever trained me up in holy and righteous living, in the fear of God, and in the love of truth; surely, surely you would not now, to seek a miserable safety for me or for yourself, make me over to Satan irrevocably and for ever; you would not persuade me to insult Heaven, by a false oath! and were I timid and base enough to do so, would you not expect that, like another perjured Sapphira, I should be struck dead, even in the temple,

and that at the day of judgment I should make the angels shudder by standing before the heavenly throne, and accusing you, yes you, you, you, my own mother, as the destroyer of my soul !”

There was something affectingly solemn, almost awful in the look and action of the agitated girl as, with uplifted finger, and a countenance aghast at this frightful conjuring of her own mind, she pointed with increased vehemence towards her parent, at every repetition of the word—“ You.”

“ Spare me, spare me, dear Edith ! I cannot bear such horrible imaginings,” cried Mrs. Colyton, whose maternal feelings thrilled at this passionate appeal, and who felt ineffably shocked as her conscience upbraided her that her wishes for the marriage with the hateful Seagrave were at direct variance with her religious duties, and little better than a subornation of perjury. Her deeply implanted piety, her tender love of her children, and the timidity and worldliness which are the usual concomitants of age, were all struggling with such vehemence

in her bosom, that she remained in a perplexed and agitated silence, utterly unable to give vent to her emotions. After a brief interval, Edith, in whose mind the most anxious thoughts had been rapidly revolving, suddenly exclaimed—

“ In Walter’s unfortunate affair nothing can at present be done ; all must depend upon the decision of the Court Martial ; to whatever penalties you or my father may be exposed, and I will not believe that any have been incurred, they cannot be averted by any immediate act of mine ; for myself I care not ; but I must apprize the Sheltons of the danger that menaces them that they may either withdraw from it, or prepare to encounter it. I was the original cause of the perilous dilemma in which they are placed, and I ought not to lose a moment in warning them of its nature. I will go over instantly to Hales Court.”

“ Do so, my child !” said Mrs. Colyton, willing to withdraw her daughter from the contemplation of her own misery by occupying her thoughts with the Sheltons—“ Do so ; they are wise, discreet, and friendly people, who may

perhaps suggest some means of extrication, both for themselves and us, and in the mean while I will endeavour by my prayers to avert the wrath of Heaven—I will supplicate its protection for our menaced and afflicted house.”

On her arrival at Hales Court, Edith was presently closeted with her friend Agatha, to whom, after preparing her by intreating that she would not be shocked or agitated at the alarming intelligence she had to communicate, she revealed the unhappy plight in which Walter was placed, the discoveries made by Seagrave, and the full particulars of his audacious proposition, kindling with indignation as she reached the latter part of her statement, until she visited the object of her wrath with still more unmeasured abuse than she had bestowed upon him in conversing with her mother. Passion and strong excitement seemed, indeed, to sustain her, for she betrayed little of that lassitude and exhaustion which the harassing events of the day might have been expected to produce in so sensitive a mind and a frame so delicate.

“In spite of your friendly premonition, I

will not deny that I am much distressed by your startling tidings," said Agatha — "but surprised I am not, for from the moment that I learnt our house was beset by a nightly spy, I felt assured that we should ultimately be brought into trouble. How we shall act in this emergency is a matter for consultation; that we shall confront it resolutely and, perhaps, successfully I have, however, little doubt, because we have that inexhaustible courage which springs from the approval of our own conscience, and consequently a just dependance upon that supreme Power which can free our hands from chains, and deliver our feet from the snare, even were we ten times more sorely beset. I feel for you rather than for myself; for not only have you more complicated trials to endure, but less of the health and bodily strength, and forgive me if I add, less also of the mental fortitude which might fit you to struggle with them."

"Alas! I know that I am in every respect a poor weak creature," sighed Edith.

"Nay, there you wrong yourself most fla-

grantly, and me, too, if you impute any such meaning to my words. Methinks, indeed, I already perceive a strange alteration in you ; for whereas I have ever hitherto seen you patient, mild, and gentle, you are now inflamed with passion, your eyes sparkle, your bosom heaves, and in speaking of Seagrave, you call him nothing less than the execrable wretch, the atrocious, remorseless, blood-thirsty villain, and other such opprobrious terms, which, although they may be merited, seem but little suited to the soft and mild-looking mouth that utters them. Whence comes this sudden bitterness of ungovernable animosity ?”

“ It is not simple hatred, for I always disliked the man ; nor is it altogether my detestation of his recently developed baseness ; but when I think of him as one who aspires to become my husband, an irrepressible rage seems to fire my very brain, and my heart, my gorge heaves with an unutterable loathing and abhorrence, because—because—.” She blushed deeply, broke off, and appeared by her gasping respiration to be struggling with some powerful

emotion that for the moment completely deprived her of speech.

“Because what, my little blushing, panting friend?” inquired her companion.

“Oh, my dearest Agatha! do not despise me, do not hate me—do not look down with contempt upon your unfortunate Edith. I told you I was a poor weak creature, but you cannot have suspected the nature of my weakness. I can no longer conceal the secret of my heart from myself, and it may, perhaps, afford some solace to my overburthened bosom, if I may confess it to you. Know, then, that I abhor, I execrate Seagrave, not only upon his own account, but because I fear—I feel—Oh, Agatha, dearest Agatha! I love, passionately love, Stanley Forester!”

As she uttered these words, she buried her crimsoned face in her friend's bosom, burst into tears, and continued sobbing with an almost hysterical vehemence.

A momentary thrill electrified the heart of Agatha, as she heard this unexpected declaration of attachment to a man, upon whom she

had herself bestowed her whole affections, and who had avowed a reciprocal passion. It was but an instantaneous spasm; she was infinitely too high-minded to harbour deliberate jealousy, or any other feeling than that of the most poignant and tender compassion, as she enfolded her friend in her arms, exclaiming—"Be composed—be comforted, my dear friend. How can you imagine that I should love or respect you less for this avowal, or why need you be ashamed of admiring such a man as Stanley Forester?"

"Oh call it not by so cold a name as admiration," cried the enamoured girl, recovering her voice, but still unable to look up. "I told you it was love, passionate, devoted love. I sit apart all day, I seek the most secluded solitude, because I can there hold companionship in thought with the one object on which my heart delights to brood; and recall his every look, word, action, and even the tones of his voice, from the first instant that I saw him lying wounded and ghastly in Goathurst-wood, to that thrilling moment, when, as he bade us farewell, he pressed my trembling hand to his lips,

and invoked a blessing on my head. When thus absorbed, I hate every intruder who would interrupt such entrancing meditations; and methinks, dearest Agatha, even your society would be irksome to me, but that to you I can now talk of Forester. Oh! I feel so much relieved, so much tranquillized in my mind, spite of the perils that environ me, now that I have made this confession, and have obtained a confidant in my own dear Agatha!"

"Look up then, Edith, release me from this strained embrace, and check the palpitation of your heart, which I can feel throbbing against my bosom, or the vehemence of your emotion will bring on an attack of your distressing hysterics."

"You are right, you are right," said Edith, raising her head with an air of modest pride, and shaking the tear-bedewed curls from her glistening eyes; "I know not why I am thus agitated, for it is no dishonour to confess that I love Stanley Forester. Oh! is he not everything that is gentle, generous, and brave; and when I avow that I revere, that I adore him, am I not

exalting and ennobling my own heart? Can that flame be otherwise than sweet and holy which has been kindled at so sanctifying an altar? Did you ever know, did you ever hear, did you ever read of a character so magnanimous and grand, so humble and unassuming, so formed for deeds of heroism, and yet so gifted with all the graces and accomplishments that may enchant and win a woman's heart? What patriotism, what devotion to his country! What a self-sacrificing love of liberty! What fortitude in enduring sufferings and privations! What romantic courage in confronting the most appalling dangers! What indomitable perseverance in the great cause to which he has dedicated himself! Oh! methinks I could dwell for ever upon his virtues, and yet not exhaust the catalogue."

"He may, and I firmly believe, that he does deserve this exalted eulogy," said Agatha, who felt that she could not act a kinder part than by endeavouring to detach her unfortunate friend from a passion so utterly hopeless;—"but have you reflected, that the man upon whom you

have thus bestowed your affections is a proclaimed outlaw and traitor, whom you may never see again ; that he may be condemned to a perpetual exile ; and that, if he is apprehended in this country, he must inevitably perish upon a public scaffold ?”

“ Then he will become a martyr, his blood will make a religion of my love, and his memory shall be embalmed in my widowed heart,” said Edith, with a slight shudder. “ Grant that he live, and that I never see him more, I shall still cherish hope ; and oh ! is not so sweet and enchanting a hope better than any reality to which my heart might otherwise aspire ?”

“ Have you reflected, my dear friend, that he may possibly be attached to another ?”

“ No—I have reflected upon nothing ; but even if he were, I should not be left without consolation ;—I would die for him—my heart would soon be broken, and oh ! how soothing would it be to bless him with my latest breath, to have his name hovering upon my lips just as they closed for ever !”

“ But has he ever sanctioned this passionate

enthusiasm ; has he ever given you reason to believe——?” Agatha checked herself, fearing that the question she was about to propose might have sprung from an ungenerous, and perhaps a jealous curiosity.

“ He has never evinced any other feeling, nor uttered any other expression, than such as gratitude might dictate,” said Edith, divining the purport of the suspended interrogatory ; “ and I am aware, therefore, that the fervency of my unreturned love may appear to your more guarded and correct perceptions unfeminine, indelicate, perhaps even culpable. I can only repeat, that I am a poor, weak, susceptible girl, more deserving your compassion upon every account than your censure ; and, dearest Agatha, since this confession will be entrusted to no mortal ear but your own, since it will remain garnered and treasured up in my heart of hearts, why may I not cherish it, and delight in it, even as the miser rejoices in the consciousness of his buried hoard, or as the wild bee is gladdened by his store of undiscovered honey ?”

“ Alas, Edith ! but if the treasure or the

honey be detected and carried off, will not the agony of disappointment outbalance all the pleasures of hope?"

"I know not—I care not. I am surrounded upon all sides with wretchedness and perils. Do not, therefore, dear Agatha, do not in pity seek to deprive me of the only solace that offers itself to my bewildered and afflicted heart?"

Although Edith's companion deeply felt the necessity of weaning her, if possible, from an attachment that could only aggravate her unhappiness, she would not persevere after such an affecting appeal; and indeed a high-minded sense of delicacy, when she referred to the embarrassing predicament in which she herself was placed, as the unintentional rival of her friend, withheld her from obtruding any advice that might hereafter be thought to have emanated from selfish or jealous feelings. Turning the conversation, therefore, to that subject in which herself and her own family were more especially implicated, she said—"Believe me, dear Edith, that even if you had not made this communication to me, no regard to my own danger, what-

ever may be its magnitude, would have induced me to counsel your marriage with the infamous Seagrave. Never could I purchase my own life by sacrificing the happiness of yours; and in so saying I am confident that I speak the sentiments of my revered father, and of our holy kinsman. Nor could you yourself, anxious as you must naturally be to extricate your family and friends, entertain any such thought, without a crime, without contemplating perjury, even could your heart be conquered to such an act of self-immolation. No; we will work out our deliverance by less dishonourable means, or, if we must perish, we will fall like Cæsar, decorously and honourably. May I summon my parent and Father Bartholomew to assist us with their advice, concealing from them, of course, as I shall from all the world, that your marriage to Seagrave is impossible, since you have no longer a heart to bestow?"

- A willing consent being given to this proposition, the parties mentioned were introduced into the apartment, when the ancient Priest, after having heard the whole statement, ex-

claimed — “ The days of visitation are come ! The days of visitation are come ! Did I not say they were at hand, when the picture of St. Agatha fell from the wall in the little cell ; but ye smiled, as if ye would have said in your hearts, the Prophet is a fool, and the spiritual man is mad ? But I do not fear the contest that is to come, nor do I regret our past conduct. When Lot had received the two strangers under the shadow of his roof, he offered rather to give up his own family to destruction, than surrender those who had sought his protection ; thus, too, did the old man of Gibeah conduct himself towards the Levite whom he had sheltered. Lot and his family were preserved for their hospitality ; the Benjamites, who would have maltreated the wayfaring guest, were given over to destruction. We have done our duty as Christians — our trust is in the Lord — let us await his decrees with patience and resignation, and doubt not, my daughter, that he hath the power and the will to deliver from the snare of the wicked all those who obey his Gospels.”

“Well and truly spoken!” cried Mr. Shelton—“and were a similar case to recur to-morrow, my conduct should, in every respect, be the same. For myself I fear nothing; that I am anxious, upon Agatha’s account, I will not deny, and, for her sake, I shall adopt whatever measures of precaution may suggest themselves to our maturer deliberation. Think not, therefore, of us, my dear Miss Colyton, dismiss us altogether from your mind; you have done every thing that was required in apprising us of our danger, and may now exclusively consult the wishes and the interests of yourself and of your family. I positively forbid your making the smallest sacrifice of any description out of a mistaken regard for our safety.”

“Did I not tell you what would be their sentiments?” said Agatha, justly proud of her noble-minded relations.

“You are every thing that is good and magnanimous,” exclaimed Edith, “and I only regret that I can make you no other return for your kindness than by my gratitude and my prayers.”—In this strain was the conversation

maintained for a short space longer, when Edith, having arranged that they should mutually inform each other of what might occur at their respective residences, bade her generous friends farewell, and returned to Orchard Place, relieved in her heart by the confidential communication she had made to Agatha, and encouraged to face her impending difficulties by the fortitude and religious trust evinced by every member of the Shelton family.

CHAPTER II.

Dissolve, my life ! let not my sense unsettle,
Lest I should drown, or stab, or hang myself !
Oh ! state of Nature, fail together in me
Since thy best props are warp'd. So ! which way now ?
The best way is the next way to a grave.

The Two Noble Kinsmen.

PROSPECTS were now opening to Seagrave, well calculated to afford him every gratification of which a mind like his was susceptible. He was by no means sorry to be dismissed from his situation of government bully ; for not only might that perilous post, in spite of all his courage and gladiatorial skill, eventually cost him his life, but his dissolute and expensive habits kept him so constantly crippled with debts, and beleaguered with duns, that he was

glad to turn his back for a while upon London, with the interior of whose prisons and spunging-houses he wished to break off his acquaintance. Nor had he spoken untruly, when he declared to the Squire, that he was anxious to imitate his example, and enjoy in peace those sensual pleasures and luxuries, the obtainment of which seemed to him the great end of existence, and the only rational object of ambition. In spite of his drunken propensities, and of his coarse reckless hilarity, we have elsewhere intimated that he was of a malignant character when thwarted or offended. He had never forgiven Edith for her former unceremonious rejection of his suit, and he was implacably incensed against Walter for the public and flagrant insult he had received from him. Here was a double incentive to revenge, and the means of gratifying it to the utmost limits of his heart's desire seemed to be now placed within his grasp; for he flattered himself that Walter's life was completely in his power, and he knew that he could not more effectually wreak his malice upon Edith, than by first depriving her

of a brother whom she tenderly loved, and then compelling her to marry himself. From this dilemma he believed it impossible for her to escape, whatever might be the issue of the court-martial, since he had command of *her* life also, by his knowledge of the capital liability she had incurred in assisting to harbour Forester.

Cupidity and golden visions, a new and tempting revelation to the bailiff-haunted Seagrave, stimulated these schemes of vengeance ; for he reflected that, if the brother were disposed of by military law, and the sister subsequently secured to himself as a wife, he would not only clutch her present fortune, which, though small, was quite sufficient to extricate him from all his debts and difficulties ; but become presumptive heir to the Squire's estate, succeed to the residue of that rare claret, the very recollection of which made him smack his lips, and have, moreover, a reversionary prospect of all Paul Mapletoft's money, which was understood to be of considerable amount. That all this could be obtained without a crime, for

he was in no way accountable for Walter's sentence, whatever it might be, was so far gratifying, that it would save him trouble and responsibility ; and, as he revelled in the contemplation of future wealth and grandeur, he dwelt with complacency upon the altered looks of the Squire, who, in their recent interview, had exhibited, as he thought, manifest indications of declining health. To preserve appearances, and make a show of performing his promise, he determined ostensibly to favour Walter, while underhand he should tamper with the officers of the court-martial to procure his condemnation. The grave nature of his offence, indeed, rendered this no very difficult matter ; but wherever he found there was a lenient tendency towards him, he took care to insinuate that his death would be particularly acceptable to Lord Sunderland, whom he had most audaciously insulted before he left London. This fact he had learned in a letter from the Peer's secretary, and being able to establish it by showing a portion of the epistle, he exercised a powerful influence upon military aspirants, who,

in that age of subserviency and baseness, would much rather inflict the utmost rigour of the law upon a hapless brother officer, than run the risk of offending a Prime Minister. Under such sinister machinations, it is hardly necessary to state, that the trial soon gave promise of a most unfavourable conclusion.

Hetty, whom we left in the last chapter proceeding to Bridgwater, had obtained an interview with her lover ; but as it led to no immediate result, we abstain from giving the particulars of their painfully affecting meeting, for such it was, in spite of her resolution not to increase Walter's distress by any exhibition of her own. Penetrating and collected, her acuteness enabled her to suggest, and her activity to execute, whatever measures might be conducive to his defence ; and the object of her solicitude repeatedly and gratefully acknowledged that no friend can be half so indefatigable, no advocate so zealous and intelligent, as a woman whose natural shrewdness is sharpened and animated by love. She contrived to see him every day ; she consulted with his attorney, she even strove

to influence some of the members of the Court-martial by personal appeals;—a devotedness to his cause, which, while it incalculably heightened Walter's attachment, rendered the severing prospect of death still more embittering to his soul. Alas ! she had no arguments so cogent as the hopes excited or the fears awakened by the insidious whisperings of Seagrave, and the trial had no sooner begun than it became manifest to all, that the offender would be sentenced to the extreme penalty of military law. In anticipation of this event, it had been determined, as a last resource, to prepare a petition to the King, and to procure the signature of as many people of distinction and loyal gentry as it was possible to obtain. Paul Mapletoft drew up the paper, couching it in such respectful, yet earnest and appropriate terms, that it constituted a most affecting appeal for clemency ; and Edith being anxious to see her friend, took it over to Hales Court, not only to procure Mr. Shelton's name, as well as that of Father Bartholomew, but to bespeak the good offices of the former in getting it put into the King's

own hand, through the medium of his relative, who held an office immediately about the royal person.

On her arrival, she learned that Mr. Shelton was absent, and that Agatha having been hastily summoned to a poor woman, one of her pensioners, who had been taken suddenly ill, had hurried to her cottage, just beyond the extremity of the lawn, whence she might be expected to return immediately.

“ I will wait for her in her own room ;” said Edith, and she accordingly proceeded up-stairs, when, upon entering the chamber, she saw a miniature and an open letter lying upon the table at which Agatha had apparently been sitting. What was her astonishment, her agitation, at discovering that it was a striking likeness of Stanley Forester !—“ It is he ! it is he !” she ejaculated—“ and this letter dated from Helvoetsluys, is doubtless, also, from Forester—He has escaped, he is safe—thank Heaven ! thank Heaven ! Oh, how my heart leaps ! Oh, what a happy, happy moment is this !”

She sank panting into a chair, and without

balancing, in the agitation and surprise of her feelings, and her anxiety to learn the particulars of Forester's escape, the propriety of perusing a letter not addressed to herself, she snatched up the paper, exclaiming—" Brave, gallant, fortunate man! let me see how he contrived to elude the foes, and avoid the perils that beset him on every side." Her hands shook as she raised the paper to her glistening eyes, and read as follows.

" Helvoetsluys.

" A dear and valued coadjutor, who carries to the West of England duplicates of the letters with which I have been entrusted, and whose mission, I hope, will be more successful than my own, is upon the point of departure from these shores, which I only reached last night. May I flatter myself that I have friends in Somersetshire, who will not be sorry to learn, that after more hair-breadth 'scapes than I have time or inclination to enumerate, I breathe once more upon a free soil, with the pleasant consciousness of safety. May all the blessings that

an impassioned and grateful heart can dictate, or your unparalleled virtues merit, descend upon you and yours; and oh!—(kind Heaven accord my prayer!)—may you never never suffer for the generous magnanimity you have all evinced! If I mention not names, if I allude not more distinctly to the past, you will interpret the reasons of my silence.

“Wonder not that I should elude my numerous foes, closely and hotly as they pursued me both by land and sea; for is not my life ten thousand times more valuable to me now than ever it was before? Oh, peerless, incomparable woman! dear, adored Miss Shelton! when you pardoned me for declaring my presumptuous passion; when you condescended to confess your regard for the poor proscribed wanderer; when you did not forbid me to look forward with hope to the happy, happy day that shall see our country liberated, and myself not only cleared from every aspersion, but restored to that universal honour and respect which I have only forfeited in the estimation of tyrants and their minions; when you tacitly admitted, that at this glorious

epoch I might aspire to a still higher happiness, to an ecstasy, a beatitude which none, none but yourself can bestow, you conferred such an additional charm upon my existence, that methinks I felt instantly endowed with a supernatural power to defeat the machinations of mine enemies, and to snap asunder their toils, even as a lion scatters the threads of gossamer that cross his path. Nothing can delay the arrival of that auspicious day; nothing can prevent the emancipation of my oppressed country—the great, the darling, the *sole* object of my life, until the sweet and glorious hopes of love came to share the devotion of my heart. All is prepared—the cry has gone forth upon earth, —it is heard in heaven, and soon shall our noble nation, rising in its irresistible might, like a giant refreshed with wine, shake from its shoulders for ever oppression and misrule.

“ Will you be offended with me, my preserver, my benefactress, you who have thus incalculably enhanced the value of the life you saved, if I venture to solicit your acceptance of

my miniature? It was intended for my mother, but our unhappy family disputes, owing to the political course I have adopted, would not allow me to present it. In the hurried and hazardous life to which I must still a little longer be doomed, I may perchance lose it, or I may myself be lost. It will be a consolation to me to know that it is in your possession, especially should it ever lead you to bestow a thought upon the original — pardon the presumption of the idea! Keep it concealed, I pray you, for your own sake; and should its preservation be attended with the smallest shadow of risk, consign it with this letter instantly to the flames.

“Ungrateful that I am! How can I have written so much without adverting to your inestimable friend, my other fair preserver? Oh, that delicate and gentle, but brave and magnanimous girl! Never, never shall I forget her tender watchfulness, the mild melody of her voice, the affectionate heroism of her conduct. Convey to her, I beseech you — it is all I have

to offer — the homage of a fervent gratitude, which can never decay until my heart shall cease to throb.

“ Farewell, thou paragon of thy sex ! Accept the prayers and benedictions of one who pants for the day, when no consideration for the safety of others may withhold him from subscribing to his letters a name, which never has been, and never shall be sullied with a dishonourable action.

“ Ever, ever yours,

“ ——— ———.”

“ P.S. Forgive the subjoined hasty effusion. It was written to beguile an hour during my night voyage, and was never intended to meet the eye of her to whom it is addressed.

STANZAS TO AGATHA.

“ 'Tis Night — my bark is on the Ocean,
No sound I hear — no sight I see,
Not e'en the darken'd waves, whose motion
Still bears me, Agatha, from thee !
But from the misty skies are gleaming
Two smiling stars, that look, my love,
As if thy veiled eyes were beaming
Benignly on me from above.

A single plank must stem the surges
That might engulf me as I sleep,
While our frail vessel blindly urges
Her flight athwart the moonless deep.
Yet is my heart serene and fearless,
For Heaven shall guide the wanderer's track ;
Nor can my midnight dreams be cheerless,
For still to thee they waft me back.

'Tis sweet on the benighted billow
To trust in Him whom all adore ;
'Tis sweet to hope that from her pillow
Beauty for me her vows may pour.
The winds, self-lullabied, are dozing,
The winking stars withdraw their light ;
Thine eyes, perchance, are also closing,
Good night, mine Agatha, good night !

To describe the agonizing emotions of Edith, as, not without the greatest difficulty, and, after repeated efforts, she finished the perusal of this letter, would be utterly impossible. It seemed as if the only hope that had buoyed up her sinking soul, the single tie and stay that had supported her shattered heart amid the threatened shipwreck of all its happiness, had been violently wrenched away and snapped asunder. Disappointment, wretchedness, shame, a hun-

dred hornet thoughts assailed and stung her brain at the same moment. She had formed an attachment to the destined husband of her friend, for such he seemed to be, and to that very friend had she made the confession of her ill-starred passion. Agatha and Forester were devoted — were betrothed to each other ; such was the construction she put upon the letter, a pervading thought which soon overpowered every other, leaving her mind, exhausted by the fierce struggle of her emotions, in a state of pitiable bewilderment and stupor. The miniature, the letter, the room itself, every thing swam before her eyes ; she uttered a shuddering groan, and tottering towards the bed, which stood in a recess at one end of the apartment, had hardly strength sufficient to throw herself upon it.

A temporary insensibility ensued, when, just as she was again opening her eyes, and recovering consciousness of what had occurred, Agatha re-entered the chamber, and hurrying towards the table, exclaimed — “ Imprudent that I was ! how could I leave these precious yet perilous

relics thus exposed? how could I forget the injunctions I had received? What a noble likeness of a noble-minded man! Commit it to the flames in case of danger! Never—never! The letter indeed shall be destroyed, for, guarded as it is, it might betray more than one secret that I would fain keep concealed; but, as for thee, thou faithful image of a patriot and a hero! until a better hiding-place can be found for thee, thou shalt lie here, next to that heart in which thine original is preserved.”—She kissed the miniature tenderly, and was depositing it in her bosom, when, a deep groan occasioning her to start and turn hastily round, she ejaculated, in a tone of profound astonishment—“Gracious Heaven! Edith, dearest Edith, is it *you*?”

Perceiving the deplorable plight of her friend, and instantly attributing it to the real cause, she ran towards her, rather instinctively than with any definite notion of what she should say or do in a crisis so exquisitely painful and embarrassing to both parties. Edith, however, was quickly beyond the reach of any solace

that words could afford. As her suspended faculties recovered their power, her distress only exhibited itself in a more active form, and she burst into an hysterical paroxysm, in which cries and tears were succeeded by that wild unnatural laughter, which is perhaps the most heart-rending manifestation of mental woe. The violence of the attack soon passed away, but it left her so faint and helpless, that she could only articulate her desire to be sent home, a wish which Agatha prepared to obey, when she saw that her friend was evidently pained by any hesitation in complying with it. She was accordingly helped into the carriage, Agatha placed herself beside her, and they proceeded towards Orchard Place, the sufferer never opening her eyes, nor pronouncing a single word during the ride, though she often uttered deep sighs, which she in vain endeavoured to suppress. On their arrival, Mrs. Colyton and Hetty, learning that she had been visited by one of her hysterical attacks, of longer duration than usual, assisted in placing her upon her bed, when Agatha, after affectionately kissing her half-inanimate

friend, whispering in her ear a few words of comfort, and promising to see her again on the morrow, returned with a heavy heart to Hales Court.

From this day a marked alteration became evident in Edith's character and deportment. That extreme sensibility which had occasionally subjected her to hysterical attacks and to the most painful fits of nervous excitation became gradually deadened; the fine, tremulous, exquisite delicacy of her impressions was now but rarely manifested; even her intellectual perceptions appeared to be blunted, and she sank into a calm and torpid but deep melancholy, under the influence of which she often sought some retired spot, where she would sit for hours together, twitching the forefinger of her left hand, her eyes riveted to the ground, and her faculties enchained in such a profound abstraction as to render her totally insensible to surrounding objects. All her customary amusements and avocations were now neglected, Agatha, Hetty, her friends, her family were forgotten; she neither read, nor worked, nor recreated herself

with music—solitude seemed to be her only enjoyment. A languor, a lassitude, a listless and morbid apathy continually oppressed her, and she resigned herself to that stupor of melancholy and dejection which is infinitely more distressing than the passionate sorrow which finds relief in tears or wailings. Edith's eyes were dry, she uttered no complaint, but it was evident that her heart was ever weeping, that she cried without a voice. An habitual sense of propriety would not allow her to neglect her personal appearance; she was always neatly attired, but she now betrayed, for the first time, an inconsistency that showed how unconscious she was of her own proceedings, sometimes coming down to the breakfast table in a full dress, or presenting herself to evening visitants in her morning's hood and scarf. When these little oversights were pointed out to her, she would assume a languid smile, express wonder at her own inadvertence, retire to her chamber for the purpose of changing her garb, fall into a new reverie, and return to the drawing-room in the same state as before. If surprised in her solitary rambles, or the lone-

ly seats where she loved to muse, and mope, and talk to herself, she would conjure up the same faint smile, converse for a short time, but presently relapse into silence and melancholy, and seek an opportunity of escaping from her companion. It was not easy, however, thus to surprise her, for she became watchful and cunning in avoiding notice ; and even in performing the most common and innocent actions, would affect great mystery and concealment.

This morbid state, although it was of rapid growth, did not of course exhibit itself in the first instance ; but the unnatural torpor of feeling to which we have alluded was the immediate consequence of the discovery she had made at Hales Court. On the morning after that occurrence, she sought her mother, and informed her that as she had been deeply reflecting during the night upon the frightful consequences that might ensue to herself, to her family, and to her dear friends the Sheltons, from her opposing Major Seagrave's wishes, she had at length made up her mind to marry him, only stipulating that the ceremony should be protracted for

some little time,—a delay indeed which was rendered inevitable by the critical situation of Walter.

Mrs. Colyton, not less astonished at the suddenness of this change, for Edith had petulantly resisted all her former solicitations, than at the apparent unconcern of her manner, tenderly embraced her child, and then hurried to communicate the pleasant tidings to the Squire.

“ ‘Sdeath, Becky !” cried the latter, “ I told you she was a dutiful girl, and would presently come to her senses. Consent ! to be sure she will, how can she help herself ? What signifies her not loving the man ? People may be very happy together, as we ourselves can vouch, without any of that nonsense. Zooks ! if we could only get poor Walter cleared of this ugly affair, and reconciled to Seagrave, we would strike up the match presently, and have our jollification after all, and I would broach the new batch of Burgundy.

‘ Come, fill me a glass, fill it high ;
A bumper, a bumper, I ’ll have ;
He’s a fool that will flinch——’

Body o' me ! I forgot, I ought not to sing while my poor boy is in this terrible jeopardy." And the good Squire being convinced that it was incumbent upon him to be decorously unhappy, neither sang nor whistled for above two hours, for thus long did he remain discussing his twice renewed tankard of spiced sherry, and his companionable pipe, under the crooked pear-tree.

According to her parting promise, Agatha returned on the following day to visit her friend, anticipating a painful meeting after the distressing discovery of the previous morning, especially when she recollected the violent effect it had produced in the first instance. But, to her infinite surprise, the embarrassment was all upon her own side, Edith receiving her with a settled composure of look and manner, although a faint blush suffused her features at their first encounter. "I am glad, very glad you are come," she exclaimed in a voice that was slightly faint and tremulous; "and I am still more delighted that I read that most interesting and important letter, although I am now amazed how I could have taken such an unwarrantable liberty. For-

give me for it, dearest Agatha; indeed, indeed, I knew not what I did, I was so surprised—so agitated—so bewildered at the moment.”

“I have nothing to forgive you, dear Edith; I should of course have communicated to you the fact of our friend’s escape, and indeed I should have willingly shown you the letter itself, but that—”

“But that my foolish, unsolicited, and inexcusable confession would have withheld you. Forgive me for *that* also, dear Agatha, and recollect what a poor, fond, susceptible, inexperienced, weak-minded girl I am. No, not altogether weak-minded when I once see the proper course that I ought to pursue. Let me but know the delusion, and I can abandon it quickly and for ever. This I have done, promptly, decisively, and I am already, as you may perceive, much more calm and happy in my mind, only feeling astonished that I could have been so blinded, so infatuated as to indulge in fond reveries that now appear to me absolutely chimerical and absurd. It was the involuntary error of a dreaming, visionary girl, but I have

lost no time in repairing it ; I have this morning agreed to marry Major Seagrave."

"Heaven forbid that you should thus sacrifice yourself, or that I should be in the smallest degree instrumental to such a shipwreck of your happiness ! Not for worlds, my own dear Edith, would I see you thus throw yourself away. As to Stanley Forester indeed, it may be equally idle in either of us to dream of him ; in all probability we shall never see him again, for he is engaged in perilous, and, I fear, Utopian schemes, which, if they do not involve him in some fatal catastrophe, may condemn him to perpetual exile. Nor, were it otherwise, need you conclude that I — indeed, dear Edith, his over sanguine temperament has misled him ; there have been no passages between us to warrant the inferences he has so confidently drawn — and as to pledges, I have never dreamt —"

Agatha hesitated and blushed, for, in her anxiety to afford some solace to her friend, and her fear of compromising herself by affirming either too much or too little, she hardly knew what phrases to use.

“ Oh no—no—no !” cried Edith—“ you are affianced to each other, even if no promises have been interchanged. He loves, he adores you—how could he do otherwise? you are, you must be attached to him—this is equally inevitable—and you have too sacred a regard for truth to deny it, after what I have seen and heard. Nay, do not blush so, dear Agatha; it is a passion that honours and ennobles you. You were formed for each other, you are worthy of each other, and though I shall not perhaps live to see it, the day, I trust, may yet arrive when you shall constitute the happiness of each other’s lives.”

“ These are idle reveries, when it is much more probable that we shall neither of us ever behold him more. We are both, therefore, equally inconsiderate to have yielded to a passion so vain and hopeless.”

“ Yours is neither vain nor hopeless, for it is returned. I have his gratitude, his esteem perhaps, while you possess his whole and undivided heart. You forget that I have read his letter.”

“ It matters little who possesses the heart of

a perpetual exile ; but allow me to revert to yourself, and to your own prospects. Why, why have you made this rash, this impossible promise about Seagrave ?”

“ To secure my father, to restore happiness to my dear mother, who, though she has recently forborne from urging me on this subject, sits gazing on me in vacant wretchedness until the tears tremble in her eyes, and then turns aside that I may not see them. And though last not least, to place my invaluable friends at Hales Court beyond the reach of perfidy or peril.”

“ And for this—for an object which, so far as we are concerned, we have solemnly forbidden you to consider, even for an instant, you would sacrifice all your hopes of happiness ?”

“ Do I seem miserable ? Am I not, on the contrary, more calm and collected than usual ? I am happy, very, very happy in the knowledge that Forester is safe : I am not without hope, for I anticipate the day when you will be united to him, and enjoy a life of uninterrupted felicity ; and I do not utterly despair even of

my own fate, for Walter's trial must necessarily protract my marriage; and in the mean time I may have a fortunate escape from all my troubles and trials."

"Indeed! By what means?"

"Harkye, dearest Agatha! it is a great secret—but I will tell you in a whisper—before the wedding-day is appointed *I may die!* Lend me your hand—you know how violently my heart used to be always throbbing—feel it now—can you guess what makes it so tranquil? It is stunned, paralyzed; ere long, I trust, it will cease to beat altogether, and then I shall be happy and at rest."

Inexpressibly shocked at this despondency, or rather despair, which alarmed her the more from its calm and settled character, Agatha left no consolations, no arguments, no endearments untried that might cheer her friend's mind, and induce her to change her resolution respecting Seagrave; but all her affectionate instances proved unavailing. Edith was not petulant and impatient as she had heretofore occasionally been when opposed, but she adhered to

her declared purpose with a quiet immoveable obstinacy, declining all farther argument, and receiving the remonstrances addressed to her with a listless indifference. Absent and impassive, her feelings seemed to be all deadened: even from her once-loved Agatha she sought every opportunity of escaping, courting solitude and the communion of her own benumbed and stricken heart with greater eagerness than ever.

A few days after this conversation, the unhappy girl wandered to a spot at a small distance from the house, which from its seclusion, and its possessing some superior attractions in point of scenery, had latterly become her favourite haunt. A footpath, deviating from a long uninteresting lane that led towards the moors, conducted the village boys in the nutting season, before the return of which period the last year's track had generally become imperceptible, to a quiet sequestered dell, planted with sycamores and young oaks, woven together in parts with a thick web of hazel bushes. The banks on either side the descent were

clothed with fern, broom, and other luxuriant vegetation, topped with bushes of hawthorn, briar, and maple, which tangling together overhead formed natural arbours here and there, beneath which the children would sometimes seat themselves to divide or banquet upon their nutty spoils. Through this unfrequented glen ran a gentle streamlet, clear and pellucid, although the water, from its having traversed the peat lands of the moor, had acquired a dark brown hue. Towards the centre of the recess, the runnel, falling over a rocky ledge not more than two yards in height, spread itself into a shallow pond of some extent, fringed with rushes and water-lilies, and overhung with alders, and then gradually contracting itself to its former narrow limits, was betrayed by its music, or the more vivid green of its rushy margin, until it worked its way out through an opening at the opposite extremity of the dell. On a mossy crag beside this mimic waterfall, Edith delighted to sit for hours together, indulging the mournful reveries by which her mind was now haunted, and yet occasionally soothed by

sweet as well as bitter fancies, while in the deep loneliness of the place, she listened idly to the rustling of the boughs as the wind stole nestling amid their leaves, or the lulling sound of the waters, that seemed to warble responsively to the breeze.

On the morning in question she had gathered a rose before she left home, and deliberately plucking off the leaves, she committed them one by one to the stream, exclaiming as they were borne away from her—"Thus have the happy years of my life been rudely torn away from me—they are gone and I know not whither—they are whirled about and agitated, and then wafted away into invisible, irrecoverable darkness, leaving my heart, like this poor leafless stalk, bare and withered, and surrounded with nothing but thorns. I remember when the very odour of a spring morning, even before the earth assumed its vernal smiles, could develop futurity, conjuring up to my imagination, nay almost to my senses, a Paradise of flowers and perfumes, and sunny landscapes fanned with gentle airs, animated with the melody of birds, the hum

of bees, and all the cheerful sounds of teeming life. It was as if the precocious breeze blew aside the veil of Nature, and showed me the laughing features that were to remain hidden from others until the coming May. I was happy then, and my brooding fancy soon quickened pleasant images into life. I am now miserable—it is Autumn, and methinks in the fading hues and falling leaves that announce the coming torpor of the winter, I see the prefiguration of my own approaching death. The smell of the grave is in my nostrils, and the brawling of this brook among the pebbles sounds in mine ears like the rattling of the gravel that shall soon be thrown upon my coffin, before it is covered up for ever. Yes, earth is preparing to die, and it is time that I should do the same. Hark ! what sound is that ? it is the noise of the merry squirrels chasing one another from bough to bough amid the hazels. And now I hear the cheerful whistle of the plover, and the deep tender note of the wood-pigeon, and the cawing of the rooks returning to their roost, trees near the church, and the joyful

twittering of the smaller birds as they behold the winter-feast of vari-coloured berries that make the hedges gay, in spite of their diminished leaves. The waters too, that quiver before me in the beam, seem to tremble with delight; each blade of grass that flutters in the sunshine assumes a semblance of enjoyment, and yonder gold-skirted clouds float through the crystal fields of ether with a happy and a tranquil air. Why am I mocked with these sounds and shows of uncongenial gladness?—why are all things happy, except myself?

“Hark! hist! I hear a sound that is more accordant with my feelings. Dong! dong! dong!—yes—it is the passing-bell; and now I remember to have heard that one of the villagers was dead. Dead!—Heavens, what a change! To see no more this most beautiful pageantry of the world, to quit the glorious sun, moon and stars, to be torn away from earth, sea and sky, from the pleasant fields, the glancing waters, and the waving woods; to have the heart-strings snapped, and the affections violently wrenched from all to which

they clung ; to hear no cheerful or harmonious sounds, to see no shows of beauty, to feel no sweetness or delight from any sense, but to lie stark and cold in the silent darkness of the tomb, until corruption shall have mingled us with the undistinguishable earth, —— nature shudders at the thought. And yet how soothing and delicious to have the throbbings of the anguished heart stilled for ever, to feel no more the pang of disappointment, to forget all our cares and sorrows, to quit this stormy and unhappy world, to lay our heads in the hushing lap of earth, our common mother, and thus placidly, gently, unconsciously to sink into the sweet and dreamless sleep of death ! Oh ! would that I were dead—that I were laid beside my dear, dear brother ! *He* reposes tranquilly —sickness nor sorrow can touch him more. When, oh ! when, shall I share his peaceful slumbers ?”

The fair mourner ceased to speak—her eyes were fixed vacantly upon the water—her thoughts had reverted to her deceased brother, and the tears fell fast upon the rose-stalk which

she still unconsciously held. So profound was her abstraction that she did not notice the approach of a visitant, who had now nearly reached the little crag upon which she sate. It was her friend Agatha, who stole, indeed, upon her privacy with a noiseless and reluctant foot, for she came as the messenger of woe. When she called at Orchard Place, tidings had just reached it that Walter had been condemned to death by the Court-Martial; and the afflicted family, instructing her where to find Edith, had requested her to break the fatal intelligence which they themselves had not the courage or the heart to communicate, and at the same time to escort the wanderer home. Of this painful commission Agatha, herself needing the consolation which she came to bestow, acquitted herself with her usual tenderness and self-possession. After cautiously preparing Edith in a way to prevent as far as possible, any surprise or shock to her feelings, she gradually revealed the appalling truth, accompanying it with whatever circumstances of hope might tend to mitigate the severity of the

blow. She knew not whether to be gratified or shocked at the apparent apathy with which her dismal announcement was received. "Condemned to death!" exclaimed Edith—"happy, happy Walter! then all his sufferings and sorrows will soon be over. He will be laid beside Richard—I shall soon join them, and we will all sleep in the same grave together. The marriage with the hated Seagrave must now, at all events, be deferred; and harkye, Agatha, when the bridal morning comes, instead of tasting the marriage feast, I will swallow poison; instead of the merry peal, the single solemn bell that you now hear shall toll for your departed friend; they shall strew flowers upon my hearse, instead of putting a ring upon my finger;—we will have a funeral in lieu of a wedding, and I shall be the happiest bride in the world, for the grave shall be my husband."

In this incoherent strain she ran on as they returned to the house, talking wildly of different plans for avoiding the marriage with Seagrave, but never once reverting to the terrible sentence that had been passed upon Walter,—

a want of sympathy which sufficiently attested the disturbed and wandering state of her faculties.

Plunged as the Colyton family already were in a desolation that left them nearly inconsolable, an occurrence took place at the present juncture that was calculated to add to their distress. Hetty Chervil, as we have already recorded, had been almost a daily visitant to Walter previously to the court-martial, exerting herself in his behalf with an indefatigable activity ; but after the commencement of the proceedings, she had discontinued her excursions to Bridgwater, as if she had suddenly lost all interest in the question. From this period, according to the report of the servants, one of whom had closely watched her, she had made clandestine assignations with a strange officer, whom she met every evening at a little distance from the house, and with whom there was too much reason to conclude that she had eloped on the very evening of the day when the fatal sentence against Walter was pronounced, for from that hour she had disappeared, without leaving behind her the smallest trace

that might clear up the cause or the direction of her flight. This conjecture was presently converted into an apparent certainty by the report of the peasants, Bill Coomb and Teddy Chubb, who declared that in their return from Somerton fair they had met her hurrying towards that town in an open chaise driven by an officer. Paul Mapletoft, too, on being closely questioned, for he had taken no notice of the previous hubbub occasioned by her disappearance, recollected that he had a few days before lent her a sum of money, although she had refused to explain the purpose for which she wanted it. It was now taken for granted that she had obtained this supply to facilitate her present flight, or to secure the means of future indulgence with her new admirer ; a base and fraudulent action that seemed to form the climax of her misconduct. Walter, who of course remained in confinement, solemnly declared that he knew not what was become of her, and participated fully in the general astonishment, though not in the indignation, for his confidence in Hetty's honour and fidelity remained unshaken, and he trusted

her speedy return would satisfy others as well as himself as to the motives of her temporary absence. Her own family, equally in the dark, were filled with surprise and dismay at the tidings of her elopement; and many tongues were loud in reprobating the heartless and unprincipled girl who could desert and defraud her benefactors at such a trying moment, when her friend Edith was visited by afflictions that threatened to derange her faculties, and her quondam lover, Walter, was lying under sentence of death.

In the midst of the complicated calamities that pressed thus heavily upon the inmates of Orchard Place, no measure was neglected that promised a chance, however feeble, of affording relief to their misery. Many signatures had been obtained to the petition to the King for a mitigation of the sentence, and Mr. Shelton undertook, for the Squire was hardly to be trusted in any matter of business, to travel night and day until he arrived in London, and saw it delivered into the Monarch's own hand. To this journey he was influenced by several considera-

tions. Alarmed more than he chose to express at the responsibility his family had incurred in harbouring Forester, and not choosing to place himself in the power of such a faithless adventurer as Seagrave, his knowledge of James's character suggested to him that he would have a much better chance of safety and pardon by frankly confessing what he had done, and throwing himself on the royal clemency, than by trusting either to the probabilities of concealment, or the sordid promises of the Major. Prompt to execute what he had once conceived, and equally anxious to afford Walter a chance of escape, and to secure his own family from danger, he took charge of the petition, set off instantly upon his journey, and relaxed not in his speed until he had reached the metropolis.

CHAPTER III.

There's no retiring now ; we are broke in
The deed past hope of pardon. If we prosper
'Twill be styled lawful, and we shall give laws
To those that now command us. Stop not at
Or loyalty, or duty :—bold ambition
To dare, and power to do, gave the first difference
Between the king and subject.

The False One.

IMITATING the example set by Stanley Forester in his letter to Agatha, we shall avoid all mention of the perils and adventures that attended his escape from Hales Court. His latter life had afforded such a succession of similar enterprises that to himself they appeared scarcely worthy of record ; and we know not how to account for his passing scathless through such repeated ordeals, unless by offering him

as a singular illustration of the old adage, that fortune favours the bold. Achievements that to others would have seemed impossible, he had happily accomplished by simply daring to attempt them, and it must be recollected that the ample funds placed at his disposal, combined with the disturbed and disaffected state of the country, offered peculiar facilities to a man who was not less dexterous than dauntless, and who possessed, moreover, in the graces of his person, and the winning enthusiasm of his eloquence, an almost irresistible power of persuasion. Although he had dispatched his impassioned letter immediately upon his arrival at Helvoetsluys, truth compels us to admit, even at the risk of lowering him in the estimation of those who imagine that a lover's heart, like the Polar needle, should invariably point one way, that the thoughts of his absent mistress did not by any means form the exclusive occupation of his mind. He loved his Country at large better than any individual that it contained; patriotism was the ruling passion to which every other was subservient,

and even if all impediments had been suddenly removed, and he could have married Agatha amid approving friends, and under every favourable auspice, he would not, to secure his own happiness, have withdrawn himself even for a single day from the prosecution of that great and urgent cause which had for its object the welfare and the liberties of a whole nation. Nor were his generous views for the extension of freedom limited to his own country.

“It is the object of the French Monarch,” he once exclaimed to a friend, “to establish arbitrary power throughout Europe upon the basis of Popery, in which nefarious project our own besotted ruler is eager to second him. For this royal treason, King James must and shall be deposed; there is no alternative, no compromise with a man who has broken his faith with God by changing his religion, and with his people by invading the Constitution. But shall I be satisfied when England has thrown off her chains, when she has become the seat of civil and religious liberty? As soon shall the handful of turf in his cage make

compensation to the lark for the loss of the wide and verdant earth over which he loved to range, as the freedom of our own little Island satisfy a heart like mine that yearns to expatiate over a whole emancipated world. No—England shall only take the lead, as she ought to do; she shall be the bulwark and vanguard of Liberty, whence the Manichæan war of the good against the evil principle shall be carried on until in the fulness of time, unless my sanguine hopes deceive me, she shall finally establish either by her influence or her example, the universal triumph of free and liberal institutions over slavery and superstition.”

Animated by this generous but perhaps visionary enthusiasm, he had no sooner forwarded his letter to Agatha, than he betook himself to those grave and important duties to which all the energies of his life were dedicated. At Bruges, to which place he immediately proceeded, he was so fortunate as to rejoin Henry Sidney and Admiral Herbert, the two friends who had shared his late perilous expedition to England, and who, under assumed

names, had been fellow occupants of the lone house in the fields beyond Ormonde Street, where Walter Colyton had taken refuge. The former was brother to the celebrated Algernon Sidney, and after an active participation in all the preliminary measures of the Prince of Orange, both in England and upon the Continent, was now prepared to share or to revenge his brother's fate. Herbert, who had been equally forward and enterprising, was the first who with the bluntness of a seaman advised the Prince of Orange to attack the legitimacy of the infant Prince of Wales, a suggestion which was adopted by the discontinuance of the public prayers for his safety.

From the report of these colleagues, abundantly confirmed by the busy and immense preparations for war that he beheld on all sides as he traversed the country, Forester learnt that every thing was proceeding prosperously for the good cause ; that the grand Armament intended for the invasion of England was nearly completed, and that the resources of the States, utterly inadequate as they at first appeared to

such a gigantic enterprise, seemed to increase with the magnitude of the demand made upon them. In the striking contrast offered by the Prince of Orange and the King of England, Forester had an opportunity of observing how much more absolutely the power of a ruler depends upon his personal character, than upon external circumstances. William, a posthumous son, born with but slender expectations of ever wielding any sovereign authority, defectively educated, and enjoying for many years no better station or income than such as might befit a private gentleman, had succeeded by his talents and his virtues, when he was still a youth, in recovering the stadtholdership, while he was at the same time idolized by the whole people ; universally recognized as the champion of his country, he had repelled a formidable invasion, triumphed over all his enemies, reformed the internal administration of the States, and was at the present moment at the head of a powerful and wide-spread Protestant confederacy, forming schemes of ambition that would affect the destinies of the greater part of Europe.

Governing only one insignificant country, and not even possessing the name of a King, he had made himself master of a moral power that justified him in the vast and audacious plan he had formed for humbling Louis the XIVth, then the most mighty potentate in Europe, and for invading the dominions of another monarch who was himself an able and experienced commander, and exercised an unquestioned sway, at the head of a victorious fleet and a brave and numerous army, over three powerful kingdoms.

James, on the contrary, had succeeded to the throne of a puissant empire in the vigour of his matured age, with all the benefits to be derived from his father's example, from long observance of the art of governing, and the experience of an eventful life. Monmouth's unsuccessful invasion had strengthened his authority, and the people at large, terrified by the executions consequent upon that event, as well as by remembrance of the civil wars, were disposed to submit to almost any stretch of royal prerogative, rather than encounter the horrors

of another revolution. And yet in three short years, by a series of misrule and oppression, originating in the most stultifying bigotry, had the King so thoroughly alienated the nation and nullified himself, that when the shock came he could scarcely get a sword drawn or a musquet fired in his cause, and his sovereignty fell as instantly and helplessly to pieces as if he had been a mock monarch of straw, wearing a crown of cobwebs, and wielding a sceptre of sand. True it is that his ruin was aided by a complication of treacheries on the part of his pretended friends and advisers, to which history offers no parallel; but he could not have been thus egregiously duped, had he not been blinded by his own fanaticism and thirst of arbitrary power.

It was the misfortune of the Prince of Orange, if it may not be rather termed a blot in his escutcheon, that his public and his private duties were at this period placed in direct opposition to each other; that he secretly contemplated and ultimately effected a direct usurpation upon the rights of a father, brother, and

sister in law, (for the Princess Anne was older than his wife, and had of course a prior claim to the crown,) and that to mask his designs he was obliged to descend to that mean and Machiavelian system of deceit which in state affairs is honoured with the name of policy, while in a narrower sphere it would be stigmatized as a base and fraudulent duplicity. James, whose country he was about to invade for the purpose of dethroning him, was not only his uncle, but his father-in-law, with whom both himself and his wife, in their private correspondence, maintained the tone of affection and confidence becoming such a close relationship, and to whom the Prince, up to the very last moment, made the most solemn protestations, through his Ambassador Von Citters, that his expedition was not destined against England. To confirm these reiterated assertions, every artifice that could be suggested by the most sagacious subtlety was put in practice. A war with the Algerines afforded a pretext for fitting out numerous ships, which as soon as they were equipped were sent to different remote stations with orders

to remain there for some time and then to return, a stratagem which equally concealed the extent and the object of his armament. Transport vessels, hired or bought in different ports in the names of private adventurers, but in reality on the Government account, were continually ordered to shift their stations. Arms, ammunition and artillery, were put in boats and sent up towards Nimeguen, where he had encamped an army under pretence of protecting the Electorate of Cologne, which cargoes, after being unladen, were secretly brought back in vessels that had been sent up empty ; others lay concealed among the Islands formed by the Rhine and the Maese ; many fell down to the sea by different canals from those by which they had mounted ; nothing was neglected that could distract, conceal, or mystify ; nothing omitted that the most astute and crafty genius could devise.

But the master-stroke of the Prince's policy, in the opinion of those at least who while they falsely accuse the papists of not keeping faith with heretics, think every perfidy is warranted

in the cause of Protestantism, was his art in deluding Pope Innocent XI. "Taking advantage of that Pontiff's animosity against France, he made him believe that the Emperor was to send a great army to the Rhine, that he was to join it with one equally great from Holland, and march at the head of both into France. For the advancement of this project large sums were remitted by the Pope to the Emperor; and these sums thus fraudulently obtained from the head of the Roman Catholic world, were employed in the dethronement of a Roman Catholic King."*

The city of Bruges having lost a part of its trade since the enlargement of Amsterdam and Antwerp, was no longer in so flourishing a condition as formerly; but its fine cathedral, its numerous churches, its handsome squares, and market-places planted with rows of trees, the venerable Gothic town-house adorned with figures of the ancient Counts and Countesses of Flanders, and above all the lofty and massive structures that flanked the numerous canals,

* Dalrymple's Memoirs, vol. i. p. 198.

all of which had once been tenanted by opulent merchants, proved that the place had in former days been the emporium of a wealthy commercial people. Some of these large gable-ended brick mansions with their multitudinous windows and galleries, and counting-houses abutting upon the water, so as almost to overhang the shipping, were still tenanted by rich individuals of the mercantile class, with one of whom Forester was acquainted, and willingly accepted his offer to become his inmate during his abode in the city. The interior of his house, with its spacious painted staircases inlaid with marble, its lofty hall hung with dusky pictures, and its ponderous parlours dark with panelings of carved work, exemplified the rude and somewhat gorgeous magnificence of the princely merchants, who, by engrossing the trade of the Indian Islands, had filled their coffers even to overflowing with golden tribute. The Heer Cornelius Van Voorst, the present proprietor of the house, a little withered old man, with a sharp, money-getting look, who seemed to be half dried with the smoke of winter stoves, and

of his perennial pipe, having settled his sons in the Indian Colonies, and portioned off his daughters in marriage, had cheered the solitude of his old age by taking unto himself a second wife, whom he called by the endearing epithet of his Lily. The Juffrouw was in every respect the reverse of her husband, being young, fair, fat, and fresh-coloured, and delighting to bedizen herself with huge ear-rings, Levantine chains of Zeeckin gold, Maltese crosses, and whatever other finery she could ransack, from the antique japan cabinets or cedar wardrobes that stood in every recess of her dormitory. As they had now little occasion to use the principal apartments, their customary sitting-room was one that projected from the main building, and formed at once a parlour and a private counting-house for the merchant. Its ponderous fire-place was lined with Dutch tiles, decorated with Scripture figures; high-backed leathern chairs with quaintly carved mouldings, were ranged against the wall; an Indian matting covered the floor; musketoons and short pikes were suspended *in terrorem* over the

mantelshef, on either side hung a theorbo and a guitar, the respective instruments of his former and his present wife ; in the open drawer of a small enamelled cabinet was to be seen a collection of Roman medals, neatly arranged ; alchymical retorts, Asiatic curiosities and idols, sextants and quadrants, and other nautical implements were scattered about upon the shelves, intermixed with musty bonds, piles of letters, invoices and account-books, all neatly ticketed and labelled, and wearing a methodical air, in spite of the incongruous nature of the assemblage. In the dim twilight of the massive oaken roof a parroquet was perched upon a beam, breaking the obscurity by its bright colours, and in the centre of the apartment, at the time of Forester's introduction, sat the Heer Van Voorst, with his spectacles on his nose, turning over the leaves of an enormous brass-clasped ledger, from which he was making extracts, or occasionally looking through the latticed casement at a long perspective of rich galliots and other craft, with their high heavy sterns, carved, gilded, lacquered and glittering

in the sun, among which he contemplated with peculiar complacency those that were his own property, or came consigned to his house of business.

After the first salutations were over, Forester, knowing the character of his host, observed that he was happy to see such an appearance of bustle and business in the town, and the canals and rivers so unusually full of shipping, a circumstance which added to the throngs of eager faces in the streets, and the chiming of musical bells from every tower and steeple, led him to conclude that he had arrived on the day of some public festival. “Alas, mynheer!” said Van Voorst—“we have little or no renovation of trade at Bruges; the young adventurers and upstart merchants of Amsterdam and Antwerp have run away with it, and will keep it, I suppose, till they have ruined themselves and all those connected with them. Ah! business was not carried on thus in the good old times. My own sons who are settled at Amboyna, and some of the Indian shippers of the old school, who like to be safe in their agents, send their ships

still to Bruges, and consign them to Cornelius Van Voorst, who has been known these forty years upon Change, and who never flinched from his engagements, even when the homeward-bound India fleet were all destroyed or taken by the English. But trade is slack, very slack, and prices ruinously low. Half the ships you observe belong to the expedition, which is now pretty well understood to be destined against England; and the chimes are playing because the Prince, who arrived here last night, is to receive an address this morning from the Burgesses, whom I must shortly join at the Town House. Mijn God! what this great armament has cost! Think you it is really intended against England?"

Forester expressed his confident belief that it was, adding a fervent aspiration for its success.

"Success! it *must* succeed, Mynheer Forester, or we shall all be ruined. If it should fail, there is an end of our holy Protestant religion and of every thing else!" — Here he shut up his huge ledger, and took

from the table-drawer a short thick Bible, secured with embossed silver clasps.—“It is for this holy book—it is to save us from Popery and slavery—it is for the sake of truth and of our blessed Saviour—it is in the cause of the religion of peace and concord that our Prince draws his sword,” continued the merchant with increased energy—“and it becomes every good Protestant to forward the great and good work, whatever sacrifices it may cost him. I have chartered to Government my large ship the *Wilhelmina*, and made them pay me four rix-dollars a ton more than they did to any other. And so they ought. *Mijn God!* what that ship has cost me!”—He pushed aside the Bible, and opening his great ledger, every page of which was headed with the words *LAUS DEO* in large capitals, he turned to the account of the ship *Wilhelmina*, and was preparing to announce the sum total of her cost, when he observed that some of the expenses were not yet posted up, and again laying his hand on the Bible he continued—“Yes, *Mynheer*, I should have been ashamed of myself if in this sacred

cause I could have been lukewarm or ungenerous, for it becomes the rich to set a good example, and besides, they can better afford to sustain a loss. A loss!—Heaven forbid any such calamity, for I have also lent the Prince money, much money upon bond—as a zealous Protestant I could not do less, and I am to have six per cent interest; I refused to take five and a half. Surely, my good friend, you do not think there is any possibility of failure?”

Forester spoke in the most confident terms of the success of the expedition.

“Ha, my dear Sir, you comfort me—you restore my breath—it would go to my heart were the accursed cause of Popery to triumph. Then the Wilhelmina,—she is named after my wife, my Lily,—Mijn God! what that ship has cost me! and if the Prince were to be defeated, he would not be able to pay even the interest of the bonds, and we should all be ruined! But his horoscope—his nativity—Ah! I have no fears, for if there is any truth in the stars, he is born to succeed in all his undertakings. I would not have lent him a stiver if I had not

previously consulted his horoscope." The Heer Van Voorst then lowering his voice, and pointing to the alembics and retorts upon an upper shelf, informed his visitant that in his younger days he had fallen into the delusion of attempting the transmutation of metals, an infatuation of which he now spoke with the bitterest contempt; and congratulating himself on having abandoned Alchemy for the noble, true, and magisterial science of Astrology, he unlocked a secret drawer, and drew forth a little black-looking volume, which he opened and laid it upon the table. "Behold!" he continued—"this is the Prince's horoscope. What a happy configuration! How auspicious are all the planetary positions! Ha! I would not sell my bond for two per cent. premium, nor cancel the Wilhelmina's Charter Party for a hundred double ducats. What a blessed thing it is to feel such confidence in the cause of religion! Aha! here comes my wife, my dear Lily—now will I introduce you to the prettiest woman in all Bruges."

The tinkling sound of her ear-rings, chains

and other ornaments, hung wherever a place could be found to suspend them, announced the entrance of the Juffrouw, who, in spite of her little round fleshy figure and fantastical over-finery, would have really been pretty, but for her affected and coquettish airs, which imparted an irresistibly ludicrous effect to her appearance. Quilted and wadded as was her squat form, she talked of the fashions with all the confidence of a Parisian *elegante*, declaring that her robe, according to the averment of her French milliner, was made upon the exact model of one lately worn by Madame de Maintenon at the grand *fête* of Versailles. She laughed at nothing, to show her white teeth; made the parroquet perch upon her arm to draw attention to its round fairness, and played upon the guitar to display the rings with which every finger was bedizened. She sang too with a voice which though untutored would have been sweet and pleasant enough, had she not affected to pronounce every word with a lisp.

All these ridiculous airs and graces of his dear Lily, her husband contemplated with the

doting complacency of an old man who fancies that he has renewed his own juvenility by marrying a young wife ; until, upon his offering to take her with him to the Town House, to see the ceremony of presenting the Address, she declared that she had made an appointment with Signor Pedroso, to take a lesson upon the guitar.

“ Signor Pedroso ! ” exclaimed the merchant, while his shrivelled features assumed a lowering expression ; “ why did you order him when you knew I was to be absent ? I like not these hot-blooded Spaniards, who sit looking into their fair pupils’ eyes, and almost exchange breaths while they are warbling amorous duets together ; nor do I believe that you can gain any improvement from such a boy.”

“ Boy ! he is thirty years old.”

“ Is not that a boy ? Believe me, he knows nothing of the guitar. Send him about his business, my darling Wilhelmina, my dear Lily, and I will procure you in his stead Mynheer Steenberg, a countryman of our own, a steady man, in the prime of life, not more than sixty,

who must needs possess a good and practised voice, for he has been a singer these thirty years."

"If I consent to this," said the wife, who with a truly Dutch feeling wished to make a bargain of her compliance, "you must give me the torquoise necklace that I saw in the shop of Levi Ben Hooghan, the Jew lapidary."

"Well, well, you shall have it, my Lily, though the rogue must lower his price." The merchant's countenance cleared up, for he had shrewd misgivings of Signor Pedroso, and was glad to get rid of him on any terms. As he drew on his Burgess's gown, preparatory to his departure, he expressed a hope that the Prince would provide for the defence of the country when he sailed with the expedition, lest they should be exposed to the horrors of a French invasion.

"La! my dear Cornelius, what horrors have we to expect?" cried the lisping wife, holding her head conceitedly on one side; "I am told the officers are gallant and charming men, and that most of them play divinely upon the

guitar. I hope some of them will be quartered in our house."

"A pest upon the Popish crew, the whiskered vagabonds, they shall play no guitar in my house!" cried the Heer Van Voorst, resuming his lowering look, and then, informing his wife that he did not intend to wait the completion of the ceremony, but should return in half an hour at the farthest, he took Forester's arm, and led him out of the house in moody silence.

The Town-Hall was crowded with magistrates, burgesses, and inhabitants of Bruges, a grave, sedate, commercial-looking race, but with an expression of dogged resolution in their countenances betokening that when once provoked out of their Dutch phlegm, they might easily be goaded into the opposite extreme of ferocity, a disposition which had not long before been evidenced in the savage massacre of the De Witts. Around the hall hung time-stained portraits of the ancient governors of Flanders, adding a solemnity to the scene, as their eyes seemed to take the same direction as those of the living assemblage, and to gaze at the illustrious

Prince who was soon to become the most conspicuous and powerful potentate in Europe. A few words of unmeaning courtesy, delivered in a cold, dry manner, formed his answer to the address; and after acknowledging the plaudits, which were really enthusiastic for a Dutch populace, with a distant, not to say an ungracious bow, he retired into another apartment, where Forester, accompanied by his friends Sidney and Herbert, were shortly afterwards presented to him; the Heer Van Voorst having previously hurried home to anticipate the arrival of Signor Pedroso.

The Prince was attired in a General's uniform, a dress which from his decided predilection for the army was very rarely exchanged for any other costume. His complexion was very dark, although his hand was much admired for its fairness, as well as the fineness of its form. In person he was of the middle stature, thin body and delicate constitution, being subject from his infancy to an asthma and continual cough, natural defects which were controlled in

some degree by his strict temperance, the regularity of his habits, and his unalterable equanimity. His high aquiline nose, sparkling eyes, large forehead, and grave aspect, made some atonement for the unimportance of his figure; but, on the other hand, his manner and deportment were not by any means calculated to excite admiration, still less to conciliate regard. Accustomed to commune with his own thoughts, which were generally employed upon vast schemes of ambition, the forms and ceremonies of ordinary life, and the talk of common men, possessed no interest for his mind; and though he did not betray his impatience by any petulance of speech or demeanour, it was often obvious, by his air of indifference, that he did not hear, or hearing did not heed, what was addressed to him. When compelled to reply, it was in as few words as possible, and his short, reserved, phlegmatic manner was to many disgusting, to all repulsive. King James, who it must be confessed had no reason to speak favourably of him, says that his harsh and sour temper was known

to be proof against civility as well as good nature.* This distant and almost sullen demeanour disappeared, however, upon great and exciting occasions, especially in battle, when his deportment was free, spirited, and animating. Unsusceptible of any cordial or generous emotions, few could know him without pronouncing him to be a disagreeable and ungracious man ; but none could deny him the praise of being a great Prince, whose boldness in conceiving, and indefatigable activity in executing his ambitious schemes, could only be equalled by the calculating sagacity that almost invariably ensured their success.

When Forester and his friends were introduced to him, men who had just been hazarding their lives in his cause, he received them politely rather than graciously ; and, as if no exertions in his service could make him unbend, or forego even for a moment his claim to perfect respect and decorum, he silenced Herbert by a look of pointed reproof, as with a sailor's freedom he ventured some jocular allusion to the

* Diary, vol. ii. p. 263.

questionable birth of the infant Prince of Wales. He listened, however, with a pointed attention to every statement relative to the recent occurrences, the new assurances of support, and the general aspect of affairs in England, making occasional memoranda in a pocket-book as the parties addressed him, but rarely asking questions, except as to the imprisonment, liberation, and probable disposition of the Bishops, the value of whose support he seemed fully to appreciate. But when Sidney produced the formal invitation to the Prince to come over and liberate their country, signed by the Bishop of London, and other noblemen and commoners* of extensive influence, his countenance, in spite of his habitual phlegm, became animated while he read it, and committing it to his pocket, as if to secure so valuable a document, he briskly exclaimed—"Ay, Gentlemen, this is something tangible; this is better than a thousand verbal

*The seven who signed this formal invitation were, the Earls of Shrewsbury, Devonshire, and Danby, Lord Lumley, the Bishop of London, Mr. Russell, and Mr. Sidney.

promises and oral communications made to me at second-hand. When men are thus committed beyond the power of receding, we may depend upon them. Gentlemen, the cause in which I have embarked is your own rather than mine, but I am not the less obliged by your zeal, particularly in procuring me this paper: for your own sakes you will continue to observe a guarded silence as to my projects. I have only entrusted the secret to four of my countrymen, for whose fidelity I will be responsible. Should it therefore prematurely transpire, I shall suspect none but the English."

This could hardly be termed a very ingratiating speech, considering the circumstances under which it was delivered; but his present auditors, who began to be acquainted with his character, were well satisfied with their reception, and after having received fresh instructions for expediting the preparations in Holland, or for completing the negotiations for its protection during his absence, they were dismissed from his presence.

Forester was now unremittingly employed in

serving the cause to which he had devoted himself, not without often sending his thoughts across the water, in silent though passionate aspirations for the mistress of his heart, the beautiful and high-souled Agatha. The prospect of ultimately winning her hand inspired him with an incredible zeal and energy in prosecuting the great enterprize, on the success of which depended not only the freedom and regeneration of his country, but all his own hopes of individual happiness. Often and tenderly, however, as he reverted to her, he did not write to her again, for few confidential emissaries were now dispatched to England, and he was afraid to trust to the post, or to a common messenger, lest his friends at Hales Court should become implicated.

At length every preparation was completed; all the troops intended for the expedition were ordered to drop down from different points to Goree, where they were joined by the various transports and ships of war; but a south-west wind, that lasted for three weeks, delayed the sailing of the assembled armament, during which

time, the Prince stopped the departure of all vessels for England, in order to heighten terror by suspense, as well as to conceal the magnitude and destination of his enterprise. Previously to his embarkation, he took leave of the assembled States in a speech, wherein he declared, that if "any thing fatal should happen to him, to them he recommended his memory, their common country, and the Princess his wife, who loved that country as she did her own: his last thoughts should be upon them and upon her."—Subdued at the bare thought of the catastrophe which he had contemplated, and at the affecting allusion to his wife, the assemblage interrupted him with their tears; but notwithstanding the emotion that he observed in his numerous auditors, he pronounced his harangue with a firm voice and manly countenance, and took his farewell without once losing his self-possession.

Never had the characteristic Dutch phlegm been so universally exchanged for agitation, deep sympathy, and enthusiasm, as upon the sailing of this all-important expedition. Not

only was almost every individual of the myriads who came to witness its departure immediately interested in its fate, by having committed to it some relation, friend, or lover, who was going amid all the uncertain chances of war, to invade a brave nation, but the whole people viewed it as the great and final struggle upon which their civil and religious liberties were to depend. A dread of Popery and arbitrary power had long formed their terror by day, and haunted them like a night-mare in their dreams. The refugees, occasioned by the revocation of the edict of Nantz, numbers of whom had settled in Holland, had industriously circulated engravings representing the tortures and atrocities to which the French Protestants were subjected, and had inflamed the public animosity by still more exaggerated statements. All believed that the French and English Kings had leagued together to extirpate liberty and the reformed religion; and all felt as if the last stake, the last hope, both for themselves and for their country, depended upon the issue of the present enterprise. These were motives sufficient

to awaken the deepest anxiety in the religious and the patriotic, while the rich and selfish recollected that they had entrusted their ships and money to the Prince, and the poorer class anxiously desired to enjoy a triumph over their old enemies the English, and to participate in the benefits of their lucrative trade. In the vast multitude now assembled at Helvoet, or upon the shores and waters of Voornland, some of course were simply attracted by the unparalleled magnificence of the show; but the greater portion, drawn thither by higher impulses, were irresistibly affected and agitated, nor could the coldest spectator help sympathizing in their emotion. Brave soldiers were seen shedding tears; the sobs and broken voices of women and children were heard on all sides; thousands threw themselves upon their knees, and, with uplifted hands, implored the protection of Heaven for the armament, in all the spontaneous and energetic eloquence of heartfelt prayer.

If the sluggish-minded Hollanders were thus quickened and enkindled, it may be imagined

that the French refugees, men naturally vivacious in their temperament, were transported to a still more extravagant and rapturous ecstasy. Some ran about leaping and shouting in an absolute intoxication of delight; others alternately wept and laughed as they embraced and congratulated their friends with a vociferous joy; while the more elderly or devout threw themselves upon the earth, supplicating the Divine protection, with a vehemence of language and gesticulation that seemed almost intended to take Heaven by storm. The general enthusiasm, indeed, had previously extended itself to individuals no ways interested in the question at issue, and little thought to be capable of great and generous exertions in such a cause. Let it be borne in mind, in perpetual answer to the illiberal fiction of Shylock, that a Dutch Jew of Amsterdam, named Schwartzaw, hastened with a hundred thousand pounds to the Prince. "If you are fortunate," said he, "I know you will pay me; if you are not, the loss of my money will be the least of my afflictions."

But to Forester, the most interesting assemblage upon this occasion was that to which he himself was joined, consisting of the more illustrious English exiles, and the officers of the six British regiments in the service of the Dutch, who constituted the most formidable portion of the expedition, since they had mostly been driven from their country in the late and present reigns, and might be expected therefore to combat with the resolution of men who knew that they fought for their lives. Among these were Lord Mordaunt, who, with that impetuosity of mind, which, in a succeeding reign, carried him triumphantly through Spain, had been the first of the nobility to quit England, and attach himself to the Prince; Lord Shrewsbury, who had thrown up his regiment, mortgaged his estate, and offered his sword and fortune to the Liberator; the Lords Macclesfield, Pawlet, and Cutts; the attainted Earl of Argyle, eager to fight against a family which had put his father and grandfather to death; Fletcher of Saltoun, who had accompanied Monmouth in his unfortunate expedition, and now

hastened from Hungary, where he was serving as a volunteer against the Turks, to draw his ever-ready sword in the cause of liberty ; Ferguson, Monmouth's rash and injudicious adviser, with many other equally distinguished noblemen and gentlemen. These being formed into a circle, were addressed by Dr. Burnet, an active and eager politician and divine, who, both by his writings and his counsels, had taken a prominent share in all the Prince's measures. His large burly figure, almost justifying Dryden's satire, when he says—

“ He seem'd a son of Anach for his height,
Like those whom stature did to crowns prefer,
Black-brow'd and bluff, like Homer's Jupiter ;”

his bright eagle eye and bold look, combined with his sonorous voice and fervent eloquence, for he was truly a Boanerges, rendered his discourse singularly impressive. Reminding his hearers that they fought not only for their religion, their country, and the restoration of their honours and possessions, but for life itself, he adverted to the relentless vengeance wreaked

upon the partisans of Monmouth, apprised them that they must expect a similar fate if they were defeated, a fate to which he himself was equally exposed, declared his unalterable resolution of standing or falling with the Prince, and concluded with an impassioned appeal to Heaven, for the protection and success of the armament.

Animated to the highest pitch of courage and enthusiasm by this address, the auditory betook themselves to their several stations on board the various vessels in which they had been appointed to sail. The assembled armament consisted of five hundred transports, besides sixty-five ships of war, divided into three squadrons: the van commanded by Admiral Herbert; the Dutch Admiral Evertzen bringing up the rear; the Prince of Orange being placed in the centre, his ship carrying the flag of England, and his own arms, with this motto—"I will maintain the Protestant religion and the liberties of England."—It was altogether a glorious, spirit-stirring, and magnificent spectacle, even without the moral associations that

invested it with a still more affecting sublimity, for Heaven itself seemed to look down upon the armament with favouring auspices. The crystal atmosphere of an October afternoon, and a cloudless sun, displayed to full advantage the crowded decks, glittering arms, gay-streaming flags and banners, and all the pride and pomp of the ships, most of which were rendered distinct by the bright ray on one side, relieved on the other by the broad deep shadow cast upon the gleaming waters. But when, upon a signal given by the firing of a gun, the whole fleet sent up a deafening and tremendous shout, that seemed as if it would split the vaulted sky, a shout rebellowed with correspondent energy by the assembled multitudes upon the shore, and echoed far and wide, over earth and ocean, in long-rolling thunder, the effect was so sublime, so overpowering, that even the firmest men burst into tears, and numerous females sank fainting to the ground. Under such happy auspices, with a favourable breeze, a smiling sky, and the prayers, tears, and good wishes of a whole heart-throbbing people, was this vast

armada majestically wafted from the shores of Holland.

But, alas ! what are the hopes of mortals ? During the night the wind changed, a dreadful tempest arose, the horror of which was augmented by the darkness of the season ; the number of the ships thrown instantly into confusion, and dashed against one another ; the terrors of the landsmen, who perplexed and impeded the sailors in the discharge of their duty ; the quantity of artillery and baggage, put hastily on board and ill-secured ; and, above all, by the great numbers of horses, nine hundred of which noble animals were compelled to be thrown overboard, adding to the horrors of the elemental uproar by their piteous cries and neighings. Many a brave heart, that so lately beat high with confidence, quailed before this sudden and frightful calamity ; all was clamour, dismay, and distraction ; in the intervals of the stunning thunder-crashes were to be heard nothing but the dismal howling and whistling of the wind, confusedly intermingled with human cries and wailings, the roar of the infuriated waters,

or the sullen splash of horses and artillery, as they were cast overboard ; while the flashes of lightning increased the terrors of the scene, by revealing the storm-tossed vessels tilting against each other, as if for mutual destruction, and the heads of numerous horses, who were plunging and struggling amid the foaming waves. In two hours the whole fleet was dispersed ; so that in the morning scarcely two ships could be seen together. After having been tossed about all next day and night in the ocean, the Prince re-entered Helvoetsluys, with only four ships of war and sixty transports, some with broken rudders, their sails and tackle flying loose in the air, their guns and baggage thrown overboard, but himself retaining, in that unexpected reverse, a calm and unruffled mind, that rendered him more truly great and glorious than all the power and splendour with which he had been surrounded only two days before.

Upon what trifling circumstances does our fate sometimes depend ! Van Voorst, the astrological merchant of Bruges, having, for his own amusement, cast Forester's nativity, discovered

in his horoscope every thing that was auspicious, and imagining that his presence would be a protection, entreated him to embark on board his goodly ship the *Wilhelmina*, which, as we have before stated, was engaged as a transport. Anxious to oblige a man from whom he had received civilities, and the more so, as the ship in question was of the very first class, Forester consented. In a few days after the storm, the whole dispersed and shattered fleet was again assembled at Helvoetsluys, except one transport, which it was concluded had foundered, as she had never been seen by any of the others from the commencement of the tempest. That one was the *Wilhelmina* !

CHAPTER IV.

How greedily I receive this! Stay, best lady,
And let me by degrees ascend the height
Of human happiness. All at once delivered
The torrent of my joys will overwhelm me.

The Bondman.

LET no one form uncharitable conclusions of a fellow creature, especially of a female, while the suspicious circumstances, however strong, are yet susceptible of a favourable solution; for when motives and actions with which we are only partially acquainted, come to be fully developed, the very conduct that seemed to warrant our censure, will be often found entitled to the highest praise and admiration. This was eminently the case with respect to Hetty Chervil, whose sudden and unexplained

disappearance from Orchard Place, her presumed abandonment of Walter in the very crisis of his fate, and her imagined elopement with another officer, had occasioned her to be visited with such general and unmeasured obloquy. Not only were these imputations utterly unmerited, but she was establishing a claim to the enduring gratitude of the very parties who were now the most clamorously assailing her. Inheriting from her parents a robust frame, which had corroborated her mental temperament, she possessed a quiet strength of character that enabled her, inexperienced as she was, to struggle with difficulties and adversity much better than if she had been one of the weakly pampered children of higher life. Grafting the gentlewoman upon the farmer's daughter, she united, to a certain extent, the advantages of both classes. If she possessed neither the cultivated refinement of Edith, nor the high-souled magnanimity of Agatha, she was free from the sickly sensibility of the former, and when she had an object to carry, went boldly and straightforward to her point, without

any of the scruples that might have startled the delicacy of the latter. She loved Walter, she had a horror of returning to the vulgarity of the paternal farm, and in the double hope of saving his life and securing herself by marriage from the latter degradation, she took deep and frequent counsel of her own heart how she might be most likely to deliver him from his impending fate. No squeamish recoilings, no feminine trepidation, no morbid despondency, unfitted her for deliberating or for acting; her feelings were strong, but, instead of unnerving, they only served to brace her mind with an energy commensurate to the magnitude of the danger.

The officer whom she had clandestinely met in the meadows was a staunch friend of Walter's, who, having privately sounded the members of the Court-martial, came over to her from time to time to report what he had learned. From him she gathered that, whatever might be the sentence, it could not be carried into execution until it had received the sanction of the King. On this fact she founded the plan of her proceedings. Mistrusting the effect of the

petition that had been drawn up, unsupported as it would be by any personal appeal—knowing the favourable reception Walter had experienced from the King, and that he stood well in the Countess of Dorchester's good graces, she resolved to travel up to London, to see the Countess, and implore her interference with the Monarch for a remission of the sentence. This was a bold undertaking for a girl at a time when a long journey, trifling as it may now appear, was a laborious affair, and by no means unattended with peril; but fatigue or danger had never possessed any terrors for Hetty. A more serious impediment was likely to arise from the want of funds, which neither herself nor the officer could supply; and to Walter she would make no application, having determined to leave him in total ignorance of her proceedings, lest the hopes with which it might inspire him should prove fallacious, and embitter the pangs of disappointment. In this emergency she betook herself to Paul Mapletoft, and upon her merely stating that she was sure he would be glad to have granted

her the loan she required, when he came to know the object to which it was destined, he immediately advanced sufficient money for her purpose. Walter's military friend purchased an open chaise, and Hetty, recollecting that Joe Stokes who had attended her lover to London, was not only a brave, trusty fellow, but one who from his knowledge of the road might be of special service, engaged him, under strict injunctions of secrecy, to accompany her on the journey. All these arrangements were made previously to the decision of the Court-martial. The moment they had pronounced their verdict, the officer drove over to the appointed place of meeting; Hetty rather stimulated than daunted by the fatal tidings he brought, which, indeed, she had fully anticipated, jumped into the chaise, and they hastened to Somerton, where Joe Stokes had been ordered to hold himself in readiness with a fresh horse. The officer then returned to his quarters, the groom took his place, and Hetty reflecting that a showy young woman like herself, travelling in a mode that was then far from

customary, might be exposed to many annoyances, and perhaps insults upon so long a journey, exchanged her female garb for a man's travelling suit, concealed her luxuriant locks beneath a close wig, replaced herself in the chaise, and determined not to lose a single moment until they should reach London.

To outstrip the lumbering, lazy diligences of that era, which were intolerably tedious by day, and never prosecuted their journey during the night, was no difficult task ; but the brave and persevering girl was not to be satisfied with gaining a few hours' advance upon them. Much might depend upon having sufficient time in London to concert preliminary measures with the Countess, on whose good offices she confidently reckoned. Travelling by night she well knew to be doubly hazardous, for Walter's misadventure had apprised her that the roads were infested with robbers, even in the dusk of evening. To secure herself against any interruption or spoliation that might defeat the whole object of her journey, she desired Joe, who had a profound horror of steel or fire-arms,

though he would fight at single-staff till half his bones were broken, to supply himself with a stout cudgel, while for her own defence she provided a pair of loaded pistols, which she deposited in the hood of her chaise, fully resolved to use them should any highwayman presume to arrest her progress. In this manner did she undauntedly and unremittingly pursue her route, braving fatigue and the elements as firmly as she did the banded or solitary marauders of the night, and not stopping by day even for her meals, which she contrived to eat in the chaise, an arrangement against which Joe Stokes made many an earnest but vain remonstrance. At night, when the latter might have been puzzled to find the way, she hired a boy or peasant well acquainted with the road, who mounted the horse, and by the help of a lantern slung round the animal's neck, generally contrived to get forward without wandering from the right track. By this means, Hetty's companion was enabled to obtain some sleep, in which he indulged freely and audibly, while she herself occasionally dozed, generally keeping her hand on

one of the pistols, to guard against surprise or attack. Two or three alarms only served to establish her vigilance and resolution ; by the display of which qualities, unless it may rather be attributed to her good fortune, she arrived in London without accident, having performed the journey with a rapidity which in those days had seldom been surpassed, at least by a female traveller. Such is the influence of strong mental excitement in corroborating the body, that she was infinitely less fatigued than her companion, who, upon descending from the vehicle, was so cramped by his long confinement as to be hardly able to walk.

Influenced by the same considerations that had weighed with her before her departure, Hetty determined to preserve her male attire in London ; but as her travelling garb was of rather a rude, rustic description, and she feared that there might be some difficulty in making her way quickly to the Countess's presence unless she presented a handsome exterior, she purchased a genteel dress suit, hung a sword to her

side, exchanged her close wig for one of the small fashionable peruques, and, without waiting to recruit herself after her long journey, hastened in her new habiliments to St. James's Square.

On the afternoon of Hetty's visit, the Countess, seeing the rapid approach of that crisis which by her counsels she had not less strenuously than vainly endeavoured to avert; and anticipating, in the probable loss of her royal lover, a deprivation of all her splendour and distinction, was endeavouring, in a half melancholy and half bantering mood, to drive away the dismal forebodings that haunted her. "Morlay, *mia cara!*" she exclaimed to her parasite, with a forced smile, "I was advised not long since to imitate Madame de la Valière, to retire into a Carmelite convent, and practise all sorts of austerities; but, methinks, if I am to turn *religieuse*, I had rather, like Fenelon, attach myself to Madame de Guyon, and become a Quietist."

"A Quietist! Sprightly, vivacious, and witty as you are by nature, how can you ever

expect to become a Quietist? Not that I know any thing of Madame de Guyon's doctrines, though we have heard so much about her."

"She preaches the entire renouncement of self, the silence of the soul, the annihilation of all its powers, interior worship, and that pure and disinterested love of God which is neither degraded by the fear of punishment, nor animated by the hope of reward. Now methinks if I had a very romantic hermitage, and a smart young hermit to chat with after my fits of Quietism were over, I should not object now and then to indulge in a holy abstraction from the world, to turn my thoughts inwards, and to sit as it were in the solemn, solitary temple of my own heart, musing ineffable reveries *à la Guyon*. But positively I must have the smart young hermit."

"Nay, now you are rattling and talking like a giddy madcap as you are, for nobody was ever half so free from flirting or gallantry: you are a very turtle-dove towards the King. At times, indeed, you have been too careless of appearances, too indifferent, in the conscious-

ness of your innocence, as to what people might say. There you must confess that blunt Morlay has proved herself your friend, for I have always warned you to be scrupulously observant of decorum, always told you that Cæsar's wife ought to be not only virtuous but even free from suspicion."

"I am not Cæsar's wife, however, but his mistress."

"Tush! is it not exactly the same thing? A King's wife is his state mistress, and his mistress is his private wife."

"*Eh va via, non mi romper la testa!* Prythee no more of this. The character of the Duenna fits you not; nor would my virtue, even if I knew where to find it, condescend to have a guard set over it. By the bye, I must really see the Queen's guard-room at Whitehall, which has been embellished with arms, armour and trophies, hung round the walls, the same as the King's; but both, they tell me, are copied from Versailles. Only to think of Colonel Strangers and Captain Talbot of the Guards firing their musketoons at one another to try the

strength of their breast-plates! Their heads must have been bullet proof: or perhaps they knew the value of their respective lives, when they made so rash an experiment. And yet Talbot is a deuced pretty fellow."

"He is dying for love of your ladyship, and so indeed are several others of the guardsmen."

"Dying for me! Ah, my dear Duenna! what do you counsel in such a case? Would you have me deprive the King of his defenders? Would you wish your turtle-dove to be tried for manslaughter? Now if you were a Jesuit, as good a one as Father Petre, or Pitten, or Warner, you would give me a Janus answer that should look both ways—enable me to follow my inclinations, and yet prove at the same time that I was not deviating from my duty."

"Out upon you, madcap! I cannot pretend to cope with you in wit, so I shall e'en be silent."

"Gramercy, good Duenna! then will I be witty all the rest of the afternoon. Heigho!

I am determined to see the Prince of Wales's christening to-morrow. Have they sent home my new dress for the occasion? Father Saban will officiate; the Pope's Nuncio and the Queen Dowager are to be gossips; it is to be a grand show, and the Catholics are to put forth all their splendour, but Kate Sedley may still venture to show her face, and perhaps to outshine them all!"—Laughing, rather to display her brilliant teeth, than from any pleasurable emotion, the Countess, drawing herself up and bridling, cast a glance at the tall mirror beside her, when a servant entering announced that a stranger was below, who declined giving his name, but had desired him to state that he was a friend of Captain Colyton.

"Not give his name! What is he like! is he a gentleman? is he young? is he handsome?" enquired the Countess.

"Quite a gentleman, my lady;—very young, and remarkably handsome."

"Had I three ears I'd hear thee! Show him up by all means."

In another minute Hetty Chervil entered the

apartment endeavouring to make a man's bow, in which she did but indifferently succeed, and catching her foot in her sword as she advanced, a circumstance that added to her confusion as she blushing said—"If I have the honour of addressing the Countess of Dorchester, may I entreat you, Madam, to favour me with a private interview?"

"A private interview! truly this is a modest request for a stranger to make. Morlay, Du-enna mine, how is Cæsar's wife to act?"

"How can you ask such a question when I know your thorough discretion," said the scrupulous observer of decorum, taking the hint and immediately quitting the apartment.

"Oh Madam!" cried Hetty, throwing herself upon her knees before the Countess—"forgive me for thus intruding into your presence, and above all for appearing in this disguise, but when I tell you that I am an unhappy and almost heart-broken maiden——."

"Maiden! Egad, wench! I could have better forgiven you had you really been what your dress betokens, though I had discovered

you before you spoke, for I am not easily deceived in these matters. As one of my own sex, however, you can have no business at my feet, so prythee seat yourself, resume your composure, and tell me the purport of your visit, particularly as it has reference to my friend Captain Colyton."

Re-assured by the kindness and affability of the Countess, who pointed to a chair by her side, Hetty seated herself, and in a hurried manner, stated that Walter had been grossly aggrieved and insulted by Seagrave, entering as slightly as possible into particulars, for her woman's tact told her that any contemptuous allusion to Mrs. Audley could hardly be palatable to a lady whose own predicament was not altogether dissimilar. Premising that Walter had always been of a choleric disposition, as if that were any extenuation of his offence, she proceeded to recount their unexpected rencontre, when Captain Colyton, surprised into an ungovernable passion, had struck him before the assembled officers.

"I wish he had kicked the scoundrel round

the whole town of Bridgwater," exclaimed the Countess, while her eyes sparkled with indignation.

"And I could have been glad," said Hetty, "that the odious man had been kicked twice round the walls, but for the terrible consequences that have ensued to Captain Colyton."

"What then has happened to my Lazarillo de Tormes—my Don Quixote—my knight of the highwayman's horse?"

"Alas, madam!" said Hetty, whose bosom now began to heave, while her voice faltered for the first time—"he has been brought to a court-martial, and condemned—condemned to—to——."

"To what, child? 'Od's life! what makes you gasp and pant so? why don't you speak?"

"To death, madam!"

"To death!" ejaculated the Countess, colouring suddenly and deeply—"and for kicking the bully Seagrave! To perish in such a cause were an aggravation even of death itself. By my soul! this must not be."

"Oh no—no—no—let it not be, I beseech,

I implore — I most humbly supplicate you,” cried Hetty, who was only prevented by the Countess from again sinking upon her knees — “Let not a brave, generous man, who has no fault but a too choleric temper, be sacrificed for such a worthless, blustering sot as Seagrave. It is for this that I have travelled night and day, that I might throw myself at your Ladyship’s feet, and implore you to exert your all-powerful influence with the King in procuring a remission of the sentence.”

“My influence is not all-powerful, for I am not a Jesuit ; but that you may possess it, such as it is, you must let me understand the whole of this case. You have never explained to me who and what you are, nor your motives for this zealous interference. Are you a relation of Captain Colyton’s?”

“None whatever, madam. I was adopted by his mother when a child, and motives of gratitude towards the family ——.”

“Are you sure there was no feeling of a tenderer nature towards a particular individual of the family?” archly enquired the

Countess, who saw that Hetty again hesitated and blushed.

“ If I must confess the truth, and I will not attempt to deceive your Ladyship, there has long been an attachment between Captain Colyton and myself. I’m sure I know not how it sprang up, and I am sorry for it, since his parents will not consent to our marriage, urging that I am pennyless, and that he has no provision but his pay; and so we had no alternative, madam, but to betroth ourselves solemnly to one another, and agree to wait till he gets promoted, or acquires a fortune.”

“ Ah! I suspected as much, and I have very little doubt, when the sky falls, you will catch larks enough for your wedding dinner. I can understand now why you were so angry with Seagrave, since he wished to transfer your sweetheart to another. Betrothed to Captain Colyton! Are you aware, my love-lorn donzella,” continued the Countess, who even upon so grave an occasion could not altogether refrain from bantering—“ that I have a sneaking kindness for him myself, and that, if I save his

life, it will be only to tie him to my own apron-string as my Cicisbeo, my fashionable dangler, my private lover?"

"Save him! save him! only save his life, and I care not what becomes of myself,—I can bear any thing, provided Walter be spared. I could even resign him for ever—yes, cheerfully, madam, wil——." A rising sob, which she in vain endeavoured to suppress, prevented the completion of the sentence, while the tear that started to her eye refuted the assertion she was about to make.

"Tut, wench! I did but joke," said the Countess, taking her companion's hand, and affectionately pressing it—"A pest, however, upon the mistimed pleasantry that could thus trifle with your feelings! Kate Sedley may be accused of levity, of folly, of misconduct; but heartless I am not, and may I perish if I would not thrust this right hand into the fire, and burn it to a coal, like Cranmer's, rather than interfere between you and the object of your affection."—She paused for a few seconds, as if reflecting, and then asked—"How long has

the sentence of the court-martial been in London?"

"I hope I have anticipated its arrival by many hours; for I started from Weston the moment it was agreed upon, and have never stopped, either by day or night, until I arrived in London about an hour and a half ago."

"Is it possible? Ah! there is no speed like that of love! You are a prompt, bold, enterprising girl; and the more I see and hear of you, the more I like you, which is what I have never yet been able to say of any woman. Look you, madam, I am mainly, however unintentionally, the author of Captain Colyton's calamity; for being just as clear-sighted as other mole-eyed mortals, I procured his removal into the West, not knowing that Seagrave had been ordered into the same quarter, and thus sapiently contrived the very mischief that I wished to prevent. It is now, therefore, my duty, not less than my inclination, to remedy the evil I have occasioned. There is my hand, and I give you my honour as a Peeress, and what is better, as a woman who can deeply sympathize with your

distress, that I will set in motion all the influence and interest I possess ; that I will exert every faculty of my soul ; that I will importune the King without ceasing, until I obtain a remission of Captain Colyton's sentence."

Hetty's vehement emotions could now no longer be repressed. Throwing herself at the Countess's feet, and pressing to her heart the hand which she still held, she passionately exclaimed — " A thousand, thousand thanks, best and most generous of women ! you have saved me from despair — you have attached me to you for ever ; and if the most fervent gratitude, if my readiness to lay down my life in your service could be deemed a fitting return for your condescension and goodness ——."

She broke off abruptly, for the door of the apartment suddenly opened, and a person entered, whom, from the portraits she had seen, she immediately recognized to be the King.

" Hah !" exclaimed the monarch, starting back, and snatching at the pommel of his sword, while his whole face whitened with rage, even to the lips—" Treachery here too !

Nothing but treachery on all sides ! It is well Madam, it is well ; but I could have been better pleased had your audacious paramour been a King and worthy of my sword. Traitor as the villain is, I cannot draw against a subject."

Releasing the hilt of his weapon, he paused for a moment in apparent irresolution whether to retire from the apartment, or await an explanation ; while Hetty arose from her kneeling posture, and stood with averted face, and eyes fixed upon the floor, overcome with awe, surprise, and confusion.

" It were well for your Majesty if you had no worse treasons to fear than this," said the Countess, whose petulance was instantly piqued by any thing like a taunt, especially when she knew it to be unmerited—" Oh ! what a precious discovery have you made, and how eager do you seem to become your own Actæon ! Send for Sir Godfrey, that he may paint us as we stand—your Majesty pale with anger—yonder detected gallant twiddling his sword-knot after a most sheepish and lackadaisical fashion, and Kate Sedley looking as saucy as if she had

committed no offence. Pardon my impertinence, but were it not well that you should rub your eyes, and exclaim with the jealous-pated man in the play—‘Hum!—ha! is this a vision?—is this a dream?—do I sleep? Awake, awake! Master Ford—I will now take the gallant—he is at my house—he cannot escape me—’tis impossible he should—he cannot creep into a half-penny purse, nor into a pepper-box, but lest the devil that guides him should aid him, I will search impossible places.’ *Basta!* enough of this—I will myself search for your Majesty’s rival beneath this disguising periwig!”

Turning Hetty suddenly round towards the King, she twitched off her wig, and resumed, as her luxuriant locks fell about her shoulders—“There, Sir, you may see by these modest blushes, and by the palpitation of her bosom, threatening to break the buttons of her vest, that the Imogene who was kneeling at my feet, is, in spite of her alarming garb, a poor, timid, harmless maiden!”

“I understand not this mummerly; who is

she? what is she?" inquired James, still speaking sternly, though his ordinary complexion had returned, and his countenance was now not more saturnine than usual.

"Speak for yourself," said the Countess to Hetty—"you implored me to present you to the King—there is his Majesty—tell your own story."

Believing that the fate of her beloved Walter might depend upon her conduct and self-possession at the present moment, Hetty summoned all her energies to her aid, threw herself at the feet of the Sovereign, stated in a hurried manner the cause and the nature of Walter's offence, with the sentence it had drawn down upon him, and in a passionate appeal, such only as a loving woman could pronounce, implored a remission of the fatal decree.

"Your Majesty now perceives," said the Countess, "that there is nothing more criminal in the whole affair, no more important discovery to be made, than that a very small fraction of my Lord Sunderland's private-life

treacheries has come to light : his public treasons remain yet to be developed !”

This speech was luckily thrown in, and the moment was altogether propitious to Hetty's suit ; for recent events, in spite of James's infatuation, had begun to force open his eyes to the perfidious proceedings of his minister. By the arrival of Skelton, the ambassador in Holland, it was found that the various letters he had officially written, positively announcing the destination of the Prince's armament, had been all suppressed, and carefully kept from the King's knowledge. Other revelations had filled the royal mind with grave misgivings as to the honesty of the man upon whom he had lavished his favour and confidence ; and as instances of ingratitude and perfidy multiplied around him, he was the better pleased to find that his suspicions of the Countess's fidelity were unfounded. “ Who is this Captain Colyton ?” he enquired, speaking in a still more gracious mood than he had hitherto used.

“ The same,” replied the Countess, “ whom

Sunderland, that he might the better inveigle and ensnare him, presented at a late drawing-room, when your Majesty condescended to converse with him, and led him to expect that you would serve him, should occasion offer. Your Majesty's promises have ever been held sacred and inviolable,—an honourable fact which not even your bitterest enemies can deny."

"I made no promise; even if I had, it would have been abrogated by misconduct in the party. This is a grave, almost an irremissible offence; at the present moment it is peculiarly necessary to enforce a strict observance of discipline in the army."

"It is still more necessary not to alienate that army and extend disaffection by sacrificing a gentleman of whom they may well be proud, to such a low and worthless character as Lord Sunderland's creature, whom they cannot but view as a disgrace to their profession. Clemency," continued the Countess, who knew that the King, like other men, loved to be most highly lauded for those virtues in which he was most deficient,—“clemency is not only your

Majesty's noblest prerogative, but the one which you have ever shown to be the dearest to your heart. In Monmouth's infamous affair, did you not pardon thousands who had forfeited both life and estate? My Lord Brandon, Lord Stamford, Mr. Hampden, and many others, after being convicted of High Treason, have received their lives at your hand; and will your Majesty, who can thus generously forgive traitors, rebels, and enemies, suffer a brave and loyal soldier to be shot, because in a hasty moment he struck a bully of Lord Sunderland's?"

"I do not remember to have seen the report of this Court-martial. Has that too been suppressed, like Skelton's letters?"

"This active and undaunted girl, who travels faster than most of the royal couriers, has outstripped its arrival. She left Somersetshire as soon as it was agreed upon, travelled incessantly both day and night, and has hardly been an hour in London."

"It will probably then be laid before me to-morrow." After pausing for a few seconds, as if considering how he should word his pro-

mise, the King, addressing himself to Hetty, continued—"And if there be no more aggravating circumstances in the case than those you have mentioned, the capital part of the punishment shall be remitted."

"There! do you hear?" cried the Countess to Hetty—"you may retire. Say no more—do no more—the word has gone forth from the mouth of one who never yet violated a promise."

Hetty's impetuous feelings, however, were not to be so easily restrained. Embracing the King's knees, she invoked, in a rapturous and incoherent manner, a thousand blessings upon his head; then started up, seized the Countess's hand, pressed it fervently to her lips, to her heart, and hurried out of the room, overcome with an agitation of joy that at last burst from her eyes in tears.

CHAPTER V.

O Alicia,
Thou inconsistent spring of grief and joy,
Whence bitter streams and sweet alternate flow,
Come to my arms, and in this too fond bosom
Disburden all the fulness of thy soul !
Arden of Feversham.

UNABLE to endure the anxieties of a longer suspense, Hetty returned to St. James's-square on the following morning, when she was again received with great kindness by the Countess, who flirted and coquetted with her sweetheart as she playfully called her, laughed at her for her impatience, and bade her rely confidently on the King's assurance.

“ But in the present distraction of his affairs, may he not forget it ? ” said Hetty ; “ may not

the Report be transmitted to some of the ministers, and may they not ——?”

“Tillyvally, child! the King forgets nothing, except how to continue a king; and he is so jealous of power, even in the smallest things, that rather than depute it to another, he would be his own courier if he could. Cupid, I suppose, is painted blind because he gives his eyes to separated lovers, of whom you appear to be one of the most quick-sighted in foreseeing danger; but I repeat to you that there is nothing to fear. Strange that you, who are bold and rapid as an eagle, should at the same time be fond and timid as a turtle-dove. What! wear a man’s sword under a woman’s heart! Begone, thou unheroic hero! return to me to-morrow afternoon, and I may perchance have pleasant tidings that shall restore thy courage.”

It may be well supposed that Hetty was punctual to the appointment, when the Countess running up to her with a radiant face exclaimed —“Come, let me embrace, let me kiss thee—Gad! I should do no less wert thou the pretty fellow thou seemest; but it is as a lovesick

woman that I congratulate you, that I press you to my heart while I announce to you that Captain Colyton's cruel sentence is remitted. Here is the official paper signed with the King's own hand. I allowed him no respite till I procured it ; but for the sake of discipline, and to mark his displeasure at so gross an act of insubordination, his Majesty, I am sorry to add, has ordered your lover to be cashiered."

"Oh, that is nothing, nothing whatever !" cried Hetty—"His life is saved—his life is saved ! this is all I required, all that I hoped." The tears of joy started to her eyes, and she was again pouring forth expressions of the most impassioned gratitude, when the Countess exclaimed —

"*Basta !* enough ! You are in a hurry to set off for Bridgwater that you may liberate your lover, and I am sufficiently rewarded in having assisted to procure his pardon. Heigho ! if I am not to be happy in love myself, it is at least some consolation that I can contribute to the felicity of others. Remember that you have robbed me of two sweethearts ; first of Captain

Colyton, and, secondly, of the pretty fellow that is now before me : all I ask in return is, that at your marriage-feast you should each drink a bumper to the health of the Countess of Dorchester."

After fresh and most fervent acknowledgments, Hetty withdrew, and in another hour was upon the road back to Bridgwater, in the same chaise in which she had previously travelled, but with far different feelings from those that had agitated and distressed her bosom on the journey to London. So absorbing had then been her apprehensions on Walter's account, that she had scarcely noticed a single object, and could now with difficulty be persuaded, as she gazed upon the beautiful scenery or some of the more remarkable buildings, that she was returning by the same road along which she had so lately passed. Not only was she now sufficiently tranquillized to remark every thing that deserved notice, but the sunshine of her mind, illuminating all the objects that surrounded her, invested them with an additional charm, and increased her amazement that beauties so

striking should have been so utterly lost to her. Still, however, she only bestowed upon them a passing admiration, for being now as anxious to relieve Walter and his friends from the tortures of suspense, as she had previously been to save his life, she prosecuted her journey with the same unwearied dispatch as before.

Joe Stokes could not be made to see the necessity of this incessant exertion, since nobody could harm the Captain without the King's warrant, which his mistress carried in her bosom, and he grumbled therefore, occasionally, at the fatigue to which he was subjected ; but still he discharged his duty, never disputing a command to press forward, although he might not always obey it with alacrity. Fortune still favoured them, both in point of weather, and their avoidance of all mischance, and they hoped to complete their journey under the same happy auspices, when, as they were approaching Glastonbury, in the dusk of evening, Joe, who had previously been nodding and winking, and had only been prevented by his companion from resigning himself altogether to sleep, turned un-

consciously out of the high-road into a wide open lane, along which they proceeded for some time until it gradually grew narrower and narrower, and emerged at length upon a wild dreary common, intersected with broad reedy pools of water, runnels from which began to cross their track. It now became manifest to Hetty that they had mistaken their way, a fact which Joe, rubbing his eyes, reluctantly admitted, and both parties began to gaze about them with some anxiety. Their survey afforded no very cheering prospect; as far as they could distinguish, the marshy common surrounded them, belted by a dark mist that announced the rapid approach of night; while to add to their perplexity, their jaded beast, after having long betrayed a sullen indifference to the voice and whip of his driver, dropped into a walk that threatened soon to become a complete standstill. In answer to Hetty's proposal for retracing their steps, Joe observed that there would be no possibility of reaching Glastonbury, which was the nearest town, in the present exhausted

state of their horse; adding, that as the track they were now pursuing must at all events lead somewhere, they had better explore it until they discovered the farm-house to which it would in all probability conduct them.

No other alternative occurring to them, they proceeded accordingly at a walking pace, amid the thickly gathering gloom, sometimes descending into little hollows crossed by water, on emerging from one of which they heard the bark of a dog, and on looking in the direction of the sound, could dimly perceive a small low building, with a stable and other offices. They drove up to it, and while Hetty, who had dismounted, rapped at the door with a stick, for she could perceive neither bell nor knocker, Joe went round to the stable, the door of which was ajar and a lantern hanging within, and being overjoyed at the prospect of passing a comfortable night beneath the shelter of a roof, unharnessed his wearied animal, and inducted him without ceremony into one of the stalls, not sorry to perceive that the next was already occupied

by a horse of goodly appearance, since he thence inferred that the house was tenanted, and that he might depend upon a supper of some sort.

Hetty in the mean while having repeatedly called and knocked at the door without effect, at length heard a window open above, whence there emerged the head of a man who exclaimed with a precise clipping tone, and a nasal twang --“ Friend ! who art thou, whence comest thou, and what seekest thou, that thou disturbest my Tabernacle when all sober folks are bethinking them of bed ?”

“ I am a traveller. I have lost my way, and I request shelter until my horse is sufficiently recruited to pursue his journey.”

“ Verily I see not thy horse, good friend.”

“ My servant is putting him into your stable, for the poor beast is sorely jaded.”

“ Ah ! thou hast a servant then ; ye are two, peradventure ye are armed, whereas I am without ungodly weapons, seeing I am one of the Friends, and a man of peace, and moreover I am alone, my brother who usually tarrieth with me, being gone to Shipton Mallet.”

“ We are as peaceably disposed as yourself, but you need not admit us both, for my servant will be content to remain in the stable, especially if you will enable him to beguile the time by a supper.”

“ Tarry a moment, friend, the door shall be opened to thee, and I trust thou wilt excuse me for my caution in thus parleying with thee, seeing that I am a single man and in a lone house.”

The window was closed, and in a minute or two the door was unbolted and unbarred, when, by the light of a lantern which he held, Hetty discerned a stout man habited with all the formality of a Quaker, and wearing a broad-brimmed hat. “ Ha !” he exclaimed as he observed Hetty’s sword—“ wearest thou such an unchristian weapon? art thou a dabbler in blood? This is wrong — read St. Matthew, young man, read St. Matthew.”

At the mention of this phrase a sudden conviction flashed upon Hetty’s mind that the man before her was the identical pretended Quaker who had robbed Walter on his way to London,

the description of whose person, not less than the peculiarity of his assumed idiom, tallied precisely with that of her present companion. Startling as it was to find herself in the clutches of such a bandit, whose comrades, if they were not even in the house, were probably at no great distance, she not only preserved her courage and presence of mind, but affected great cheerfulness, laughing at her own misadventure in losing the way, bantering her companion on his quaint garb and apparent mistrust of his visitant, and adding that armed as she was with an unchristian weapon, she had not the least anxiety to attack any thing but his supper, which she intreated him to set before her without delay, however humble might be its nature. She even ventured to inquire what business he carried on, and why he resided in that lone house ; in answer to which he stated himself and his brother to be graziers, and that having the right of pasturage over those extensive commons, they sometimes occupied their present sequestered abode for the purpose of looking after their cattle, and selecting those that were

fit for market. Lending herself to this invention, she discoursed as learnedly as she could upon grazing concerns, disserted upon the last cattle fair at Wells, assisted in preparing the supper for which she declared that she was willing to pay handsomely, and laughed and rattled with great apparent glee, although she was sitting upon tenterhooks lest the return of his comrade should place her completely in his power, and defeat the plan for her extrication which she had already conceived. Some time had been occupied in talking, in preparing a rude bed in an inner room, for she had given a feigned consent to pass the night there, and in transferring the contents of a well-furnished larder to the table, when Hetty, declaring that her bumpkin of a servant, who had nothing sharp about him but his teeth, would never betake himself to his straw bed without his supper, snatched up half a loaf with a piece of cheese, and hurried off to give it to him. To this proceeding the robber, who had now made sure of his prey, offered not any obstruction; Hetty left the house door ajar, and hastening

to the stable found Joe closely examining the strange horse with the assistance of the lantern. "I'll take my Bible woth on't, begummers! that's what I 'ool," he exclaimed as Hetty entered—"that thic be tha very horse maester ruad when he were attacked anigh Westbury by tha Quakering thief. Zuggers, dostu't know'n agin, Miss Hetty? it were giv to maester by tha Squoire, avore ever we left Wesson."

"I have no doubt of it, Joe, and what is more, the Quakering thief, as you call him, is now in this very house, and may make us pay dearly for our lodging, unless we can dispose of him before his comrade's return. There! now that I have got the pistols, which I foolishly left in the chaise. I am prepared to play my part. Will you take my sword, and second me?"

"Second thee! ay, that's what I 'ool, as sar-tain shower as ever I were kirsened Joe. Dang tha gallibagging tuad! my blood do broile to vetch'n a touse on tha snob; but I 'on't mell nor make wi' vire-arms, nor soords, bin I baint one o' tha gennelvolk. Theas cudgel be my

soord, and now, Miss Hetty, I 'll vight vor 'ee till I be knocked to mommachs."

"Follow me then—do as I bid you—strike no blow till you have my orders, and, above all, be silent."

"Ees, Miss Hetty, that's what I 'ool, soon as ever I ha' done speaking; but sim to I, zunce we only want to get away from tha grip o' theas highwayman chap, we had better steal back maester's horse, put 'n in tha chay, and be off, clear and shear back again, auver that unket common."

"This we couldn't do without being heard and pursued; besides I have a little account to settle with him, and it will be, moreover, necessary to secure him before we depart."

"Howsomdever, Miss, 'twardn' a bad thought o' mine, war it? Fags! if you do talk of settling accounts, I should like to gi'n a snock on the snowl myzel, avore we goo."

"Remember, however, you are not to strike him unless I give the order."—So saying, she returned towards the house, and peeping in at a cracked window-shutter, through which she

perceived a light, beheld the pretended Quaker in a back chamber putting fresh priming into his pistols, which he deposited in a cupboard, and then ascending a narrow staircase, leading apparently to the bed-room, from which he had first addressed her. "So!" she whispered, "the man of peace is preparing to give us an appropriate reception — we must try if we cannot anticipate him. Take off your shoes, Joe; follow me — utter not a syllable."

With these words, she stole silently into the house, made her way to the back chamber, removed the pistols from the cupboard, and hid them up the chimney, well knowing that her companion could not be prevailed upon to touch them; and then stationing herself on one side the staircase foot, with a loaded weapon in each hand, motioned to Joe to place himself opposite, which he did with his uplifted cudgel, ready for immediate hostilities, and in this attitude they awaited the re-appearance of the highwayman. It was an anxious, an agitating moment; for he might return with fresh arms, and, even if defenceless, he might make a de-

sperate struggle, for he was a powerful man. Hetty's heart, however, did not quail; and as for Joe, he seemed to desire resistance rather than submission, that he might wreak his revenge upon the hypocritical caitiff, who had outwitted and plundered his master. The highwayman's footsteps were presently heard descending the stairs, and in another minute he entered the chamber, with the lantern in his hand.

"You are a dead man if you offer the least resistance," said Hetty, presenting the muzzle of a pistol at his head; while Joe, pouring forth a torrent of angry excursions, swore that he would split his skull if he moved hand or foot, a threat which he was evidently both able and willing to execute.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" cried the robber, starting back in amazement at such an unexpected greeting, and yet speaking in a firm voice — "Are you come to apprehend me, or to rob the house?"

"We are neither thieves nor thief-takers," answered Hetty; "but we have a small ac-

count to settle with one Nehemiah Goodchild, of Westbury, the friend of Aminadab Trustworthy, of Bristol, who lately levied contributions for rebuilding the Quaker house of prayer, burnt down, if I mistake not, on the fourth day of the first month of the present year."

"I begin to twig the bubble," said the robber, casting a glance at Joe.

"O! you recollect Captain Colyton's servant, do you? Well, then, you cannot have quite forgotten his horse, for it is now standing in your stable, nor the stuffing of his saddle, which I shall trouble you to refund instantly, unless you wish to have the contents of my pistol, in return for the one you fired after the Captain."

"Do you imagine I carry my prize-money in my pocket? I swear to you ——."

"Swear not at all—read St. Matthew, my friend—read St. Matthew," cried Hetty.—
"But a truce to bantering—I am not to be trifled with—no, not a minute longer. Refund the money, or take the consequences. I

can tell you the exact amount.”—She described the purse, and mentioned the number of gold pieces it contained.

“ Let me gi’n one touse o’ tha snob, and I warrant he’ll vind the chink vast enough,” cried Joe, flourishing his cudgel menacingly over his head.

“ Is that all you require?” asked the robber ; to which, receiving an affirmative answer, he continued, with a phlegm worthy of a real Quaker—“ Then you shall have it. I never fight if I can help it, particularly against odds. I think all those who resist me are fools, and I will not commit the same error myself that I condemn in others. Let me go to yonder cupboard, and you shall have the money.”

“ Perhaps you will not think it worth while to search for it in that direction, when I tell you that I have removed your pistols,” said Hetty significantly.

“ Have you?” exclaimed the robber, with an oath and a sardonic grin—“ why then, I see you’re a knowing young cove, not to be bamboozled or bubbled, and I must e’en lug

out the Darby.”—So saying, he drew forth a leathern pouch that was concealed about his person, and counted down the proper number of gold pieces, which Joe, by the directions of his mistress, conveyed into his own pocket.

“ You will soon recover this sum by the profits of your cattle trade,” said Hetty ; “ and in the mean time, as we cannot altogether trust to your honesty, spite of your Quaker garb, and your connexion with Aminadab Trustworthy, I must beg you to re-ascend these stairs, where I see we may secure you by means of this door at the foot of them.” Not sorry, as it appeared, to be let off upon such moderate terms, the robber did as he was ordered, when Hetty bolted the door on the outside, and hurrying back to the stable, directed Joe to put to their horse, who was now sufficiently recruited, by a plenteous feed of oats, to renew the journey.”

“ Of course you will take the Captain’s horse too,” said Joe, proceeding to unSTALL him.”

“ This forms no part of our bargain, and, to say the truth, I had quite forgotten him ; but,

as I presume we may reclaim our own wherever we find it, and as our safety requires that we should not be pursued, I believe the nag must e'en accompany us."

Joe waited not for a second bidding, and in a few minutes they were ready to proceed, the Captain's horse being tied to their own.

Stimulated by this companionship, as well as refreshed by the oats he had eaten, the latter carried them across the common to the high road, which they now discovered without difficulty by the help of the newly-risen moon ; and in another half hour, not a little rejoiced to have escaped from pursuit, or molestation of any kind, they reached Glastonbury. Here they remained till day-light on the following morning, when Hetty took the reins herself, and in due time made her triumphant entry into Bridgwater, bearing with her her lover's pardon, as well as his recovered horse and treasure. Her delight, her ecstasy, at this successful accomplishment of all her wishes, we will not attempt to pourtray. In a tumult of agitating joy she drove instantly to the prison ; she was ushered into the room

where Walter was confined ; she had taken the paper from her bosom, and was rushing towards him, about to ejaculate the words —“ A pardon ! a pardon !” but the accents died away upon her lips, and the brave girl, who had stood unawed in the presence of royalty, and confronted so many perils without once flinching, could only murmur an inarticulate sound, when she sank gasping into the arms of her lover, still, however, holding up the paper, in hopes that it would tell the joyful tidings which she herself was utterly unable to communicate.

CHAPTER VI.

Bel amour ! bel amour, ma foi ! l'amour de mes louis
d'or !

L'AVARE.

Would my sword had a close basket-hilt to hold wine,
and the blade would make knives, for we shall have no-
thing but eating and drinking.

The Two Noble Kinsmen.

MOST painful and conflicting had been the feelings of the imprisoned Walter during the protracted absence of Hetty ; even the uncertainty of his own life, suspended, as it seemed to be, by a single quivering hair, being forgotten at times in the absorbing interest that attached to the disappearance of his mistress under such very questionable and suspicious circumstances. Mystery ever possesses a double attraction for the human mind, by stimulating our pride as well as our curiosity to its deve-

lopement; but when our hopes and affections are wound up with the secret, every thought and feeling yields to the predominant, the torturing anxiety for solving the enigma. Such was the case with the unhappy Walter. Day after day had he confidently predicted Hetty's return, and triumphant exculpation from every charge; and as every recurring night left his prophecies unfulfilled, a deeper gloom saddened his heart, and an increased misgiving took possession of his mind. That she should have engaged herself in an attempt apparently so vain and superfluous, as that of travelling to London upon the same errand as Mr. Shelton, never once entered into his contemplation; his friend and brother officer, for the reasons already assigned, faithfully preserved her secret; and thus was the hapless lover left to all the miseries of suspense as to his own fate, aggravated by conjectures equally incessant and fruitless as to Hetty's. It appeared to him that, even the death hanging over his head would come with an additional bitterness were he to perish under the impression of her unwor-

thiness, a feeling that gathered strength as the hour approached when he was to expect the King's fiat upon the sentence of the court-martial.

It was a remarkable illustration of Edith's disordered state of mind at this period, that, affectionate and sensitive as she usually was, she scarcely ever adverted to Hetty's absence, or to her brother's terrible predicament, and indeed did not appear to be in the least conscious that his life was in jeopardy. One dominant idea had subjugated her faculties, one paramount wish reigned exclusively in her heart, it was the desire to die, after having seen her friend Agatha united to Forester. Upon this she mused in her solitary wanderings, upon this she pondered when she sat abstracted and silent in the midst of company, upon this hope she fed her heart during the sleepless nights which by debilitating her body increased the morbid state of her mind. Even her repugnance to Seagrave, once so inveterate, had now subsided into indifference. In his recent visits she had received him with a calm resignation, sitting

often in an absent mood, and as often answering him wide of the mark, but never evincing the smallest dislike, or even impatience of his presence, though it was evidently a delight to her when she could make her escape to the solitude of her own chamber, or to her favourite haunt in the sequestered woody dell beyond the meadows. Whether she betook herself to the one or the other, and indeed in the most trivial actions she performed, her manner was marked by a stealthy and significant air of concealment.

Agatha, grieved to the heart at beholding her friend in this lamentable state, and frightened at the thought that her faculties might become permanently disordered, passed almost every day at Orchard Place in the hope of consoling her ; and when she found that all her exertions, all her most unremitting assiduities failed to dissipate the leaden and listless despondency into which she had sunk, she made an attempt to remove one of its causes, by relieving her from the addresses of the hateful Seagrave. Seeking an interview with that worthy, she

endeavoured to pique whatever honourable feelings he might possess, by urging how ungenerous it was to avail himself of his power over Edith's life, to compel her to a marriage that was repugnant to her feelings, although she might be ready to sacrifice herself for the sake of her family and friends.

“*Sacre, mon cher!*” said the Major, whose scraps of mess-room French had a noble disdain of genders—“if you had known what it was to be a soldier of Fortune, which, sink me! means to be the footboy of Misfortune; if you had been for many years obliged to carve your daily dinner with your sword, and to offer your throat to be cut, that you might get wine to pour down it; if you had been compelled to skulk for weeks together in Alsatia, unable to pay for a bottle at the George, and liable to be clapped up for debt the moment you popped your nose out of it; if you had made acquaintance as I have done, with half the spunging-houses in London, why then I take it, *mon cher*, that you would not be squeamish about terms and conditions, when Fortune throws

in your way a comfortable settlement in possession, to say nothing of pretty pickings in reversion."

"Do you confess then that your motives in marriage are entirely sordid?"

"*Zwaarten en ponjaarten!* to be sure I do. What else should I marry for, and what other motives govern men of the world in this our present Anno Domini of 1688? A fellow's feelings must not be too fine for use—no balancing of straws for me; you must take the tide when it serves, if you don't wish to be left behind; he who would get on must leap the hedge as well as the ditch: that's the maxim now in religion, politics, every thing, from fox-hunting to fortune-hunting; and when others are swallowing camels, Bat. Seagrave is not the man to strain at a gnat."

"But will not your pride revolt from marrying a woman who dislikes you?" asked Agatha, who, although disgusted with the Major's unprincipled venality, wished to leave nothing unattempted in the cause of her friend.

"*Bloet ende stryd!* what is there to wound

my pride in having Squire Colyton's only daughter for my wife, a warm house over my head an ambling nag in the stable, French wine, galore, in the cellar, and as many guineas in my purse, without a single Gray's Inn clipper among them, as will enable me to take the wall of all the bailiffs in England when I next swagger up Ludgate-hill? *Sacre!* the very thought of kicking the scoundrels who have so often held me in chase, or prowled for me in the purlieus of White Friars, would reconcile me to the match if I were about to marry the Witch of Endor, instead of the pretty young witch of Orchard Place. Besides, I have a curiosity to know, for the first time in my life, how a fellow feels when he is out of debt with all the world. You see I speak frankly to you, *mon cher*; but I am a soldier, and candour is one of the good qualities upon which I pique myself."

Repulsed by this coarse heartlessness, Agatha abandoned all thought of deterring him from his purpose, though she recoiled with additional repugnance and disgust from the thought that

Edith should be sacrificed to such a vulgar, mercenary, avowed fortune-hunter. To avert such a calamity, she again and again declared that herself and her family were willing to brave his utmost malice, importunately urging her friend also to defy and to dismiss him; but the poor girl, when she could be brought to speak at all upon the subject, pleaded her father's commands and entreaties, her mother's silent and imploring looks, adding that she only required a little delay that she might avoid offence to all parties by dying; a declaration usually followed up by some mournful and incoherent allusions, in which she confusedly mingled together all the accompaniments of a funeral and marriage feast.

As to the Squire and Mrs. Colyton, after having disputed for some time who had been the first cause of introducing Hetty into the family, they employed themselves in lavishing upon her every injurious term that the indolent anger of the former, and the real indignation of the latter could devise. Her continued non-appearance seemed to confirm the worst imputa-

tions to which she had been subjected ; several others, who had kept aloof at first, now joined in the general outcry ; many, while they indulged in bitter sarcasms upon her conduct, paying a compliment to their own penetration and sagacity, by adding that they had always taken her for a bold, forward slut, who would commit any impropriety rather than incur the risk of being sent back to the farm ; and had always predicted that the Colytons would repent their having so injudiciously removed her from her proper station in society ; while many a grave aunt and sour old maid claimed the merit of similar vaticinations ; and sneers about low-born girls whose heads had been turned, together with sage remarks that upstarts never came to any good, became prodigiously rife among the third-rate gentry of Weston and Bridgwater.

Indescribable was the general revulsion of feeling, or at least of profession, when it was publicly announced that the brave, the innocent, the injured Hetty, as every one now affected to call her, had been the means of procuring the remission of Walter's sentence by a personal

appeal to the King himself. The unprecedented rapidity of her journey, her adventures in London, her exploits in recovering the horse and treasure from the highwayman, all magnified by the embellishments of Joe Stokes, spread like wildfire, receiving marvellous additaments as it travelled; until some of her recent maligners, eager to make atonement for their former want of liberality by an excess of it upon the present occasion, declared they happened to know from the very best authority, that she had shot two robbers through the body, cut the throat of a third, jumped upon the back of the recovered horse, and galloped over the remainder of the gang with the bag of money in her mouth.

But we are stating the results before we have recorded the particulars of Hetty's arrival. No sooner had she recovered the power of speech, which had momentarily failed her on first seeing Walter, than she recited, in a brief and hurried manner, the means by which she had procured the pardon, as well as her adventure with the sham Quaker; and in the embrace of her enraptured lover as he press-

ed her tenderly to his heart, in his impassioned vows of gratitude, in his fervent assurances that even the preservation of his life was less delightful to his soul than the proof she had afforded of her purity and unalterable attachment, she found the abundant and overflowing reward of all her exertions, perils, and anxieties. The rapturous half-hour of mutual congratulation that followed this recital was the happiest she had ever known, happier than any that her subsequent life could parallel, and it was passed in a prison ! Robust as was her usual temperament, both bodily and mental, her looks betrayed the effects of her fatiguing journey, while her glistening eyes and tremulous voice attested that her agitated feelings were not yet tranquilized. Still, however, she resisted all Walter's entreaties that she would rest and compose herself before she proceeded home. "Not a moment," she exclaimed ; "you have confessed that my sudden disappearance has exposed me to uncharitable conclusions at Weston, and I will not lose an instant in relieving our good friends from all anxiety, both on your account

and mine. In such a cause, I would willingly travel to London and back ten times over, despising fatigue, and laughing at danger. If my departure was covert and clandestine, my return at least shall be public; the candid and the kind-hearted will readily acquit me when they learn my motives; as to the others, I care not a straw for their good opinion." A blush of honest pride passed over her features as she started up, exclaiming, "Now, let us begone instantly; we have neither of us any thing farther to do with a prison. Oblige me, Walter, by suffering me to drive the chaise, and to retain a little longer my male attire. It is a whim, a freak that I have formed; and that our entry into Weston may be as triumphant as possible, Joe shall follow on your recovered horse, which is as well known by the villagers as the Rupert's head. I may be told, perhaps, that this display is vain-glorious, that it is not delicate, not lady-like; but as some of our small gentry have been eager to decry me, because I was a farmer's daughter, forsooth! I will show them that a farmer's daughter can accomplish something more brave

and honourable than deserting her lover in the very crisis of his fate, and eloping with a stranger. How I can be irritated at such a moment as this, I know not ; and yet I feel my cheeks tingle, and my blood boil, as I think of their ungenerous imputations ; nor can I resist the pleasure of punishing them by re-entering Weston in the pride of my established innocence, and with such a conqueror's pomp as our own humble procession can supply. To me, at least, it will be the proudest the world can offer, for *you* will form a portion of it, *you* will be sitting by my side, *you* will be the witness of my public exculpation."

In this manner, accordingly, they made their triumphant mid-day entry into the village, Hetty driving the chaise, and purposely halting for some minutes at the outskirts of the place, in order that Teddy Chubb and Will Coomb, whom she accidentally encountered, (the very individuals who had spread the tidings of her elopement,) might run before them into the village to announce her return. This they did with such activity and Stentorian effect, blazon-

ing the liberation of Walter, and Hetty's approach in men's clothes, for they had instantly recognized her, that half the village assembled round the chaise as it slowly advanced, accompanying it with various exclamations and congratulations to the door of Orchard Place, around which they continued to linger, pestering Joe Stokes with innumerable questions.

The surprise, the joy, the universal hubbub occasioned within the house by such an unexpected arrival was too tumultuous to admit of distinct description, and much too impatient to await any detailed explanation from Hetty, who contented herself therefore with stating, in so many words, that she had procured Walter's pardon, and had brought back with her the money, and the horse, of which he had been despoiled by the Quaker robber, a summary which occasioned a fresh and general outbursting of exclamations, of amazement, and congratulatory embraces. Hugging and kissing her with a loud smack, the Squire swore she made so pretty a fellow that she ought never to change her male attire. He then snapped his

fingers, shook his son most cordially by the hand, and unconsciously blew a shrill alarum upon the silver whistle that hung at his neck, a summons which presently brought a whole bevy of dogs bounding and barking around him, some of which sagacious and affectionate animals became still more clamorous in their joy when they recognized Walter and Hetty.—

“What! Duchess and Pincher, and Juno and Flincher!
Sing hey down derry, so blithe and so merry—
Halloo !”

Shouted the Squire. “*Mort de ma vie*, Hetty! they have found you out in spite of your disguise. Look at Ponto and Smiler, how they are scampering back again! Ah! they are gone to renew their acquaintance with Joe Stokes and the recovered horse. 'Sdeath! I must have a peep at the nag myself. I hope the rascally Quaker has done him justice”—and off he set, patting and examining his four-footed friend with a welcome so hearty, that it might be doubted whether the recovered son or horse excited in him the greater degree of pleasure. Having ascertained that the latter

was in good case, and uninjured in the knees or wind, he returned to the party, exclaiming to his wife, who after the first burst of maternal emotion sate with her hands crossed and her eyes upturned, ejaculating a whispered thanksgiving to Heaven—" 'Od's heart, Becky! what makes you look so glum and chap-fallen, when you ought to be as merry as a grig? By the flasks and flagons! we'll have a rare jollification on this happy event. Walter is no prodigal son returned, but we'll kill the fatted calf nevertheless, and tap the Burgundy, and throw the spigot into the fire, and fill a bumper to his health, and sing—

Give me the boy, my delight and my joy,
To my *tantum* that drinks his *tale*,
He that winches or waxes, in our Syntaxis,
Est verbum personale.

There, Becky, there's law, Latin, and logic for you, all three at once."

" Ah Jaspar, Jaspar! you will give me any thing but reason, religion, and retrenchment. Cannot you thank Heaven for its blessings in any more becoming way than by waste and

riot? But this it is to have been a cavalier, to be one of the unregenerate. Ah! you might, perhaps, become an inheritor of grace and election, if you would only once hear the Rev. Jedediah Holdworthy."

"Hear him once, Becky? Zooks! I will hear him twice to do you pleasure, for he shall come to our jollification, say grace before dinner, and sing us a song after it. There, will that content you? Ha! here comes Keeper, who would not desert his master in spite of my whistle, and Paul hastening after him, who has popped on his wig in such a hurry that the tail hangs on one side; and yonder is poor Edith, looking as pale and as wild as a white fawn; so we only want the rest of the dogs, and then the whole family would be once more happily assembled."

"What! how! hey! is this young gentleman, Hetty?" ejaculated Mapletoft, with uplifted hands as he peered at her through his spectacles—"Goodnow, I protest, and so it is! There, in her face, I see the *mulier formosa supernè*, as Horace hath it. Verily she sur-

passeth Tiresias the Theban, who was alternately a girl and a youth, whereas Hetty appeareth to be both at once.—O rare ! O rare !”

Upon Edith the effect of this most unexpected meeting was not less marked than gratifying. Electrified at the sight of her pardoned brother, and the exculpated friend of her youth, her benumbed heart seemed to be suddenly restored to its sensibility ; the current of feeling that had been so long half frozen in a sluggish apathy, resumed its rapid warmth ; she burst into tears, embraced Walter and Hetty in a transport of affectionate joy, and when she became a little more composed, entreated the latter to relate her adventures from the time she left Orchard Place,—a request that was eagerly supported by all the others of the party. Drawing around her for this purpose, they listened with deep attention to her narrative, at the conclusion of which Mapletoft started up, ejaculating—“ *O felix una ante alias Priamœia virgo !*” as Virgil hath it in the third of the *Æneid*—“ truly thou art worthy to rank with the Amazons of old, even with Antiope, Marpesia, and Penthesilea. The son of

Anchises, when he fled from Troy, bore his father and his household gods upon his shoulders, and led his son Ascanius by the hand; you return to us not less preciously laden, for you bring us back not only our liberated Walter with his horse and treasure, but yourself, vindicated from every aspersion, and dearer to us than ever. Goodnow! the ancients would have erected a statue to you. O rare Hetty Chervil!"

"Stop, stop, I beseech you," cried Hetty, blushing in evident embarrassment—"distress me not with such unmerited eulogies. Alas! when the motives of my conduct are fully known, I fear I may deserve censure rather than praise. Oh my generous friends, my benefactors, my parents, in kindness if not in blood!" she continued, addressing herself to Mr. and Mrs. Colyton—"I cannot any longer bear a concealment and dissimulation which are utterly repugnant to my nature. Will you acquit me of all intentional ingratitude, will you forgive me the first offence, the first act of serious disobedience to your wishes that I have ever committed, when I confess that in spite of

your strict injunctions to the contrary, I have maintained a correspondence with Walter; that instead of giving him up, as you ordered, I have dared to love him better than ever; nay, that we have solemnly and irrevocably betrothed ourselves to one another? With shame, with sincere penitence I confess my error, trusting you will forgive it when you recollect that had I not been stimulated by my attachment, I should never have undertaken what I have done, and that but for my disobedience to your wishes, our dear Walter might, perhaps, have suffered the full infliction of his sentence."

"Hetty is too generous in thus accusing herself," cried her lover; "*I* am the only person to blame in this affair. It was I who refused to resign the affections I had gained; I who urged her to betroth herself to me by a vow; I who prevailed upon her to maintain a clandestine correspondence; I who only deferred our marriage, in the hope that I might remove your objection to our mutual poverty, by procuring advancement in the army. That expectation has been unhappily frustrated; but if my preserver, my brave Hetty, will take me

as I am, cashiered and pennyless, but richer than ever in love, and a little wiser, I trust, from my experience, I will joyfully accompany her to the altar, in the confidence that I shall be enabled to maintain her becomingly, even without assistance from my friends. The sword which I may not draw here, I will offer to some of the German Protestant Princes, who are known to be in want of officers, and in whose service I may perhaps acquire preferment and distinction, as many of my countrymen have done before me. My resolution, as to my marriage, is at all events immutably fixed, unless Hetty withhold her consent."

"Nothing would delight me more," sighed Hetty, "if we could only obtain the consent of my benefactors, without which ——." She paused, unwilling to make any pledge, which might eventually occasion her return to the farm.

"'Sdeath, Walter, you haven't even got your pay, small as it was," observed the Squire.

"And the expense of his outfit is all lost, utterly lost," added the mother.

Edith was about to implore her father to

make over her own little fortune to her brother and Hetty, when Mapletoft, awaking from a temporary abstraction, and twitching the hind part of his wig before, in the attempt to set it right, exclaimed — “ Hey ! how ! what ! were these young folks kept from marrying by the want of money ? Brother ! brother ! why was I not told of it ? Goodnow, sister, I protest you did me grievous wrong in keeping this affair a secret.”

“ My dear Paul, I told you all about it, but you were at that time so absorbed in your correspondence with Sir Isaac Newton, that I could hardly get you to listen to me.”

“ Sooth now, sister, as I hope to be saved, I have not the smallest recollection of the circumstance. Walter, my dear boy, Hetty, child, you should have spoken to me yourselves ; but, better late than never, saith the proverb. Look you, children, I have more, much more than I want, and you may as well have a portion of it now, instead of waiting for my death. Walter, you shall not leave us ; I will make over to you the Phoenix brewhouse at Bridgwater, and two

of my houses in Castle-street, all of which being let to good and punctual tenants, will furnish you a sufficient rental for your present maintenance. Should you have a family, fail not to remind me of it, and I may peradventure provide you with a nursery. Prythee, brother—goodnow, sister, say no more about it, but let them be married forthwith: it is better than clandestine correspondence.”

To escape from the impetuous gratitude, which was already bursting from the lips of Walter and Hetty, their generous benefactor turned suddenly round, and bolted out of the room, spouting aloud from his favourite classic:

“*Nec jam furtivum Dido meditatur amorem,
Conjugium vocat, hoc prætexit nomine culpam.*”

Of the party left behind, it might be difficult to decide which was the most delighted by this munificence, Hetty and Walter equally rejoicing that all impediments to their marriage were now happily removed, the Squire and his wife not less pleased that this event could be accomplished without any expense to themselves, and

Edith, roused out of her recent insensibility, participating with her usual sensitiveness in the happiness of her friends. After a fresh round of congratulations and embraces, Mrs. Colyton hastened to receive from Joe Stokes the money of which he had been made the bearer, counting it twice over, and examining every piece with increasing satisfaction, when she found that none of them were clipped or counterfeit. Being, however, a constitutional grumbler, she could not refrain from again lamenting the loss of her son's outfit, a misfortune to which she was in some degree reconciled by the remark of Joe Stokes, that it was better he should lose that than lose his life.

Edith, anxious to communicate the good tidings to her friend Agatha, suggested that they should drive over to Hales Court,—a proposition eagerly seconded by the Squire, who liked any thing in the shape of a party, and was always ready for a ride. Singing, shouting, and blowing his whistle, he set off accordingly, surrounded by his overjoyed dogs, to order the horses, summoning Mapletoft to the window by a Sten-

torian call, and enquiring whether he would ride Dumpling, pledging himself that there should be no crupper to his saddle. This offer the kind-hearted philosopher declined, justifying his refusal by several quotations from Virgil, and declaring that he had some letters to write which would detain him at home.

Although the calm high-souled Agatha was little liable to be unduly exhilarated or dejected, such a mass of intelligence, equally delightful and unexpected, combined with the manifest improvement in Edith's spirits, transported her with gladness. Believing that her friend might now be roused out of her hypochondriacal complaint, and that her own society would contribute to restore the tone and elasticity of her mind, she invited herself to spend a few days at Orchard Place, an offer that was eagerly accepted by her visitants. After having been pleased as well as edified by listening for some time to the conversation of Father Bartholomew, who was always prepared either with some instructive remark or innocent pleasantry, the whole party set off accordingly upon their return, and

had accomplished about half their ride, when in the hollow of a little glade through which they had to pass, their attention was drawn to the clashing of swords, and through the bushes they caught a glimpse of two men engaged in eager contest, who were again speedily hidden from them by the trees. Momentary as was the glance that had been obtained of the combatants, the Squire's practised eye saw that they were engaged in a duel, and with the awakened ardour that prompts the old war-horse to gallop towards the sound of the trumpet, he dashed across the glade to the scene of action, leaving the ladies to the charge of Walter. The latter and his companions stopped where they were in order to await his return, filled with no small anxiety as to the names and rank of the parties engaged, though the females took it for granted that the Squire had hurried off with the benevolent intention of arresting the combat. This feeling of suspense was heightened when the clashing of the weapons suddenly ceased, a loud halloo was heard, and a carriage, which they had not previously seen, drove towards the spot from

another part of the glade. After a lapse of about ten minutes, the Squire galloped back to them, exclaiming, "*Mort de ma vie!* I never saw any thing done so cleanly and completely in all my life, and I would not have missed it for a hogshead of claret, though the sufferer is a friend of my own. Edith, my dear, don't be agitated or alarmed at what I am about to tell you; there is not the smallest occasion for hysterics, not even for a single tear. I know you never cared a button for the fellow, and therefore I have no hesitation in informing you that you must look out for a fresh husband. Ay, you may well start, but it's quite true, for Major Seagrave is as dead as a sword drilled most cleverly through his heart can make him."

A general exclamation from his auditors testified their astonishment at this intelligence, in farther explanation of which the Squire proceeded to state that a quarrel having arisen after the mess-room dinner, on the subject of Walter's trial, Seagrave had grossly insulted one of the junior Captains. A challenge was the consequence, and Seagrave, who had been drinking

freely, and was always violent and brutal in his cups, insisted on its being immediately brought to issue. In vain did his brother officers and his opponent press him to defer the combat to the following morning ; he would listen to no delay, and even attributed the proposal to the cowardice of his adversary,—an additional outrage, which left no other alternative than a compliance with his wishes. “The Captain was a mere boy, quite a stripling,” continued the Squire, “who had evidently taken as many bumpers as he could conveniently carry, and yet, may I die if I ever saw an old *maitre d’armes* handle his sword more delicately. It was altogether the prettiest, neatest, most delicate, dainty, and tasteful lunge through the heart I ever beheld ; and I almost envied Seagrave the pleasure of being sent out of the world in so very genteel a manner. I helped his body, for he died instantly, into a carriage they had brought with them. I couldn’t do less for a man with whom I had emptied so many bottles of claret ; and yet, when I recollect that the trial by which he sought your death, Wal-

ter, has ultimately occasioned his own, I cannot but think the fellow is rightly served. There's an end of his threats of informing against us, at all events, so we are quits for the fright, and so much for honest Bat. Seagrave, as the rogue called himself."

"And thus terminate all his infamous projects and cunningly devised schemes," said Walter. "With his death my animosity ends; but no one will deny that he was an unprincipled scoundrel, and richly merited his fate. May all bravoës and duellists meet a similar doom!"

"Amen! amen!" ejaculated Mrs. Colyton, with upturned eyes; "but I wish he had been shot before you went to London. It would have saved us all the expense of your outfit, which is now utterly thrown away."

Although Seagrave's death was rather a subject of congratulation than regret to the whole party, who were relieved by it from apprehensions and annoyances which they could hardly bear to contemplate, yet the sudden and tragical nature of its occurrence powerfully affect-

ed the minds of Agatha, Edith, and Hetty, who scarcely spoke a word during the remainder of the ride. When the first impression, however, wore off; when they considered the distress and misery that he might have occasioned, had he lived to prosecute his nefarious schemes, they knew not how to be sufficiently thankful for the deliverance they had experienced. Edith, in particular, attested by the rapid diminution of the morbid melancholy to which she had lately been a prey, her sense of the dreadful fate she had escaped. Her mind, indeed, was not restored to any degree of cheerfulness, but it did not wander; she fully possessed her faculties, although her spirits were still deeply depressed, a dejection which even Agatha's presence and good offices could not dissipate. Nothing seemed to interest her, unless she were talking about Forester, and Agatha's marriage with him,—an event, upon the certainty of which she insisted with additional earnestness whenever her friend treated it as a visionary and ridiculous fancy.

All the rest of the party, feeling themselves

now relieved from every fear and responsibility, gave themselves up to an unrestrained happiness. The preparations for the immediate marriage of Walter and Hetty occupied all thoughts, exhilarated all hearts, and Orchard Place, which had so recently been filled with grief and consternation, was now the scene of jocund hearts, smiling faces, and festive mirth.

CHAPTER VII.

How without fear of evil or disguise
Was Cynthia ! what a spirit strong and mild,
Which death, or pain, or peril could despise,
Yet melt in tenderness ! what genius, wild
Yet mighty, was enclosed within one simple child !

Shelley's Revolt of Islam.

“ WHEN Fortune smiles, distrust her ; when she frowns, defy her,” is a maxim much easier to observe in the latter than in the former clause of the sentence ; for the same confidence and self-love that incite us to bear up against her anger, as a manifest injustice, prompt us to confide in a continuance of her kindness, which we are apt to consider a right rather than a favour, a natural tribute to our talents and our virtues, rather than any peculiar patronage that

calls for our gratitude. Whether any presumption of this sort induced the fickle goddess to withdraw the light of her countenance from the inmates of Orchard Place, we will not determine; but certain it is, that the bright gleam of happiness which had so unexpectedly broken in upon their hearts, was suddenly darkened and overcast: short, indeed, was the continuance of that felicity, with which we terminated our last chapter! Enjoying their respite from the anxiety and fear which had so long pressed heavily upon every heart, and absorbed in preparations for the wedding, neither the Colyton family, nor Agatha, who continued their guest, had bestowed any very close attention upon the course of public events, important as they were now becoming. Every one knew, indeed, that an invasion was talked of; but there had been so many rumours on this subject, so often renewed and so often refuted, that they now commanded but a partial attention.

All doubt, however, was about to be removed even from the minds of the most sceptical. We

have recorded that, when the Prince of Orange reassembled his fleet, after the violent storm that had shattered and dispersed it, the *Wilhelmina* transport, in which Stanley Forester had embarked, was the only missing vessel. A man-of-war had run aboard her in the night-time, carrying away her rudder, and occasioning her so much other damage, that before morning she had nearly filled with water, which all the efforts of the pumps proved insufficient to reduce. In this helpless and perilous state, she was ultimately driven by the tempest towards the coast of Devonshire, where she was taken by an English brig-of-war, the captain of which succeeded, with some difficulty, in carrying his prize safely into Teignmouth, and having found on board numerous copies of the Prince of Orange's Proclamation, he considered these decisive documents so important, that he immediately forwarded them by express to London.

Rumours of this occurrence, and dark hints as to the nature of the Proclamation, spread rapidly through the country, quickly reaching

Orchard Place, where, however, they excited at first no very deep or powerful sensation; but widely different was the light in which this event was viewed when, on the following morning, Mr. Vervain the Apothecary abruptly entering the breakfast parlour where the family was assembled, announced that Stanley Forester, the proclaimed outlaw, having been recognized on board the captured transport, had been heavily ironed, and marched off under a strong guard to Exeter gaol, the prison at Teignmouth not being deemed sufficiently secure for such an important state prisoner, and one who had effected such numerous escapes. At the first mention of his name, Edith's electrified heart had started as if it would leap from her bosom, and as the narrative proceeded, a ghastly paleness overspread her features, her sickened and dizzy senses gradually lost all consciousness, she laid her trembling hand upon the table, in the vain attempt to support herself, and at length fell insensible upon the floor.

Nor was the sudden pang that thrilled through the bosom of Agatha less exquisite

than that which had wrung the feelings of her friend, but she possessed infinitely more firmness, and in the attentions which she eagerly lavished upon Edith, was enabled to conceal her own distress. All was instantly confusion and consternation, to the utter amazement of Mr. Vervain, who could not account for the alarming effects of a statement which to him appeared comparatively unimportant. After having assisted in administering the proper remedies to the invalid, he took his departure to circulate his tidings in other quarters, leaving the Colytons and their visitant overwhelmed with grief and dismay. The former feeling was paramount with Agatha and Edith, while the Squire and Mrs. Colyton abandoned themselves to a thousand apprehensions, blindly taking it for granted that Forester's capture would occasion all the circumstances of his recent escape from Hales Court to transpire, and involve them in some instant calamity. Walter too, recollecting how immediately he was implicated in that transaction, began to fear that his ransomed life would become once more forfeit to the law ;

while Hetty, who in the confusion of the moment had been let into the whole secret, quailed with terror, stout-hearted as she was, at the jeopardy in which her friends might be placed, and more especially at the frightful thought that her intended husband, whom she had taken so much pains to rescue from recently impending death, might again be torn from her affections and her hopes, and recommitted to prison upon a charge which would again affect his life, and which was still less likely to be pardoned than his former offence.

Upon calmer reflection, however, there appeared to be little ground for these misgivings. Seagrave was dead, Mr. Shelton had gone up to London for the express purpose of confessing their offence, and throwing himself upon the King's clemency ; and although Walter's participation, should it become known, would doubtless constitute a new and anxious feature in the affair, how could it transpire ? Forester had no interest in implicating them, and even if he had, even if he could have saved his life by impeaching his friends, all would have implicitly

confided in his honour and secrecy, considerations which quickly dissipated the panic fear that had scared them in the first instance, though they could not in the smallest degree alleviate the thrilling anxiety, the deep and desolating distress of Agatha and Edith. Upon the latter the effect of Forester's seizure and imminent danger displayed itself, after the first stunning blow, in a singular tension and bracing of her mind. Instead of abandoning herself to solitude, silence, and despondency, as she had recently done, when her heart was withering under the blight of hopeless love, every nerve seemed to be strung, every energy to be invigorated by the magnitude of his peril, and by the resolution of her whole concentrated soul to achieve, if possible, his deliverance. Of ever possessing the affections he had bestowed upon Agatha, she entertained not a dream; her love was as hopeless as ever; but there was still a hope of saving his life, of blessing both himself and Agatha by accomplishing their union; and this expectation, visionary as it was, infused a new life into her mind, and even renovated

the strength of her body. Her reason no longer wandered, but the intensity of its collectedness, centering for ever upon this one object, sometimes assumed an almost delirious appearance, exhibiting itself in a feverish restlessness, often accompanied by anger-sparkling looks, a menacing voice, and denouncements equally vehement and impotent against the persecutors of Forester. She even provided herself with a dagger, which she secretly showed to her friend, wildly declaring that if he perished, she would execute some signal vengeance, though yet she knew not upon whom the blow should fall.

In the midst of this high excitement, the result of an ardent temperament and uncontrollable passion, she endeavoured to persuade herself that she was not actuated by love so much as friendship; an opinion which, with a refined feeling of delicacy, she took particular pains to impress upon Agatha. "We must complete the good work," she exclaimed—"by achieving the liberation of our mutual friend, the brave and noble Forester. Great as is his peril, it is not more deadly and imminent

than that which lately hung over the head of our dear Walter. What! shall we suffer Hetty to surpass us in heroism and perseverance? Never—never! My life is of little value. I feel that it cannot last long; it may as well be plucked at once, as be left to wither upon the stalk; I wish to attest the sincerity of my friendship before I die, and I swear to you, dearest Agatha, that I will deliver your lover, your future husband, or perish in the attempt.”

Agatha, although she was infinitely too high-souled to harbour in her bosom a thought of jealousy, saw clearly that her friend was deceiving herself as to the real motives of her conduct, and felt an additional pang when she contemplated the probable destiny of one so sensitive and so fragile, cherishing in her heart of hearts a passion that seemed to be not less hopeless than ineradicable. Of rescuing the object of their mutual affection she entertained much less expectation than the sanguine Edith, who seemed to imagine that every obstacle must yield to the resolved energy of her wishes; and who, though she was fully prepared to resign

her own life, shuddered with indescribable horror at the bare thought of Forester's death. Agatha had been scarcely less mistaken than her friend. In the interval that had elapsed since Forester's escape from Hales Court, she had flattered herself that she had succeeded in conquering an attachment to which so many objections and impediments, all of them apparently insurmountable, were directly opposed; but her present agony and dismay convinced her that the flame she had nourished in her bosom had been smothered not extinguished, and a feeling of humiliation and self reproach was thus added to her other sources of anguish. With all her strength of mind she could hardly have borne up under such accumulated afflictions, had she not felt the necessity of supporting Edith in this trying crisis, and of devoting all her energies to the service of Forester, however desperate might appear every human exertion in his behalf.

Fainter and more faint, with the tidings of every succeeding hour, became the chance of saving him from his doom. Impressed with

the importance of making some public example of severity at the present critical moment, for the purpose of striking awe into the disaffected, the government were no sooner apprised of his incarceration, than they warned the gaoler that they should hold him accountable with his life for the safety of his prisoner, recalling his singular dexterity in escaping, and urging the adoption of the strictest precautions for his secure custody both by night and day. A Judge was specially dispatched to Exeter for the purpose of bringing him to immediate trial, and in the event of his condemnation, which would follow as a mere matter of course, the authorities of Exeter were enjoined to render his execution as public, solemn, and signal as possible. These instructions were purposely promulgated, in order to excite the greater attention, and the proceedings were hurried forwards with an almost indecent haste.

In this pressing emergency Agatha and Edith, sitting together in incessant consultation, felt the necessity of coming to some quick decision as to the mode in which they should attempt

his deliverance, though they were yet unable for some time to determine their plan. A hundred different schemes, feasible at the first blush, but found to be impracticable when closely investigated, were successively abandoned. Perhaps it was the thought of Hetty's disguise that finally suggested to Edith an expedient somewhat similar. She proposed that they should set off immediately for Exeter; that on their arrival, Agatha, putting over her own clothes the duffel cloak and hood, and other coarse habits of a country girl, should accompany her as her maid-servant to the prison, where if by means of bribery or entreaty they could procure access to Forester, he might throw off his coat, array himself in Agatha's disguise, quit the prison as a maid-servant, enter the carriage which they would keep in waiting for that purpose, and thus effect his escape. "I would assume the disguise myself," continued Edith, but that the great difference of our stature would expose Forester to certain discovery; whereas your commanding figure, so nearly approaching his own, will afford him

an additional chance of escape. By this arrangement I am aware that you will remain in prison exposed to all the vengeance of our baffled enemies; but I swear to you that the very moment I have secured Forester's safety, I will return, surrender myself to the gaoler, and endeavour to procure your liberation by representing myself as the sole deviser of the scheme."

"Generous, affectionate girl!" exclaimed Agatha embracing her—"I know that you would willingly sacrifice yourself for your friend; but for this there is not the smallest necessity, nor need we now discuss the question of any subsequent measures. To you and me it must be equally indifferent what becomes of us, provided we can succeed in our great object. Your plan is by far the most promising that we have yet devised; it offers us, at least, a chance of accomplishing our wishes, I am ready to assist in its execution, and Heaven grant us a prosperous issue!"

Once decided as to their scheme, they carried it into effect with the utmost promptitude and

alacrity, taking care not to incur the risk of defeating their project by imparting it to any one. Travelling to Exeter, where they arrived without accident, Agatha equipped herself in the dress that had been agreed upon, when they proceeded in a carriage, with throbbing, but resolved hearts, to the gate of the prison. Here Edith, stating herself to be deeply interested in the fate of the prisoner, requested permission to see him, enforcing her application by a handsome *douceur*, which the turnkey pocketed without the smallest hesitation, but declared that he could do nothing without a special order from the Governor, to whom he would communicate their wishes. So agonizing was their suspense, during his absence upon this errand, that neither of them could utter a word, though their looks sufficiently revealed to one another their mutual and intense anxiety. Some minutes elapsed before the man returned with the welcome tidings that as they were women, he was ordered to admit them; an indulgence which would not have been granted had they been of the other sex. At this moment Edith's

heart thrilled so violently, while her knees trembled beneath her, that she had considerable difficulty in supporting herself; but she leaned upon the arm of her pretended maid, and tottered forwards along a gloomy passage, terminating in a small court-yard pierced on each side by a massive, heavily secured door. One of these their conductor unlocked, drawing back bolt and bar with a harsh sound that seemed to grate upon the hearts of his auditors. They passed into an ante-room, when a second door being unfastened with the same clanking dissonance, the turnkey, whose bribe had really disposed him to be civil, told them that if they walked in, they would find their friend in a comfortable chamber, floored and wainscoted, whereas all the others were of stone. "The gentleman's not likely to want it more than a few days, but he might as well be snug as not," added the man, with which words he pulled back the door and withdrew, shutting the outer gate after him.

Forester, who was seated at a table reading, did not at first remove his eyes from the book,

imagining that the door had been opened by the turnkey, merely to bring him his customary meal; but when he heard the sound of hands clasped together, accompanied by a profound sigh, he looked up, and starting instantly upon his feet ejaculated—"Gracious Heaven! what do I see? may I believe the evidence of my senses? Miss Colyton here! Ha! and my beloved Agatha too, in vain endeavouring to conceal her noble features and commanding figure beneath those humble trappings! Oh my preservers, my nurses, my deliverers, my benefactresses! Oh most brave and gentle, most generous and lovely of your sex! why have ye thus exposed yourself to peril, why have ye sought me out in this abode of guilt and wretchedness?"

"Hush! hush!" whispered Edith, whose acute senses were all upon the alert—"speak not so loud—we may be overheard—we are come to liberate you, you must instantly comply with our wishes—I have sworn to extricate you—to accomplish your union with Agatha, *or to die!*"—Although her tone was subdued,

she delivered the last words with an energy that showed her to be desperately resolved upon her purpose, but as Forester threw back his cloak, disclosing the chains with which his wrists were bound, she fixed her straining eyes upon the manacles, shuddered all over, and gaspingly murmured, as she pressed her hand upon her panting bosom, "My heart ! my heart ! O God ! this is a horrible sight !"

"These chains cannot fetter my free spirit," said Forester, calmly extending his arms ; " my soul can spread its wings and fly in spite of these iron fetters, nor can all their bolts, and bars, and walls of stone prevent my mind from soaring to those blessed regions where the assembled champions and martyrs of liberty will receive me with rejoicing pœans as the sworn enemy of tyrants, and one of the brother heirs of immortal fame."

" This heroic enthusiasm is worthy of yourself," said Agatha ; " but England has need of your life and liberty ; she demands the services of her best and noblest patriot, and we have solemnly pledged ourselves to set you free.

Quick, quick, we have not a moment to lose ; put on this disguise, draw the cloak around you so as to conceal your fetters, and cover your face with the hood, as I did purposely on entering. Let Edith lean upon your arm as you go out,—you will find a carriage in waiting which will bear you rapidly away from Exeter, and for your subsequent safety you must depend upon your own dexterity and resources.”

“What ! extricate myself at your expense ! fly, and leave you to the vengeance of an infuriated tyrant ! Never ! never !”

“Forester ! you have avowed a preference, an ardent attachment for me ; you have professed the deepest gratitude for my trifling services—show it by complying with this my first and only request. Often have you escaped before ; why should you hesitate now ?”

“My life has been heretofore wanted for my country, that I might advocate and mature the great and glorious work of her emancipation. That is now fully prepared—upon this very coast will a powerful army be shortly landed, which, I trust, will quickly restore her liberties ;

but much must still depend upon the co-operation of the English themselves. If I escape, I must lie concealed ; I can do nothing farther in kindling the holy flame of liberty, in exciting my countrymen to join the Liberator's standard. At my trial, on the contrary, thousands shall hear my spirit-stirring appeal as I solemnly call upon them to rise against the tyrant ; at my execution tens of thousands will surround me ; then, then will I shout out with a sound of thunder, 'To your tents, O Israel !' then shall my voice, like a mighty trumpet, blow a thrilling blast that shall electrify every heart, brace every arm, encourage every hearer to rise up against the oppressor, and in this way shall my death be incalculably more beneficial to the glorious cause of liberty than would be my life, even if I could succeed in preserving it by your generous proposal."

"Forester, if my affections are of any value in your eyes, I repeat to you that they must depend upon your compliance with my request. O my noble-hearted friend ! yield, yield to our united wishes, I implore—I entreat it. Would

you, in your patriotic enthusiasm, sacrifice both yourself and us to the vain ambition of becoming a martyr?"

"Yes, all, all in such a cause. Life, indeed, with the possession of Agatha Shelton, would make this earth a heaven; but even that hope, entrancing as it is, am I prepared to sacrifice for my country."

"Let *me*, then, speak to this obdurate and intractable man," cried Edith, who had listened to their colloquy with a breathless anxiety. "Stanley Forester! you know that I have risked my own life to save yours; my brother has done the same; you have even now called me your preserver, your nurse, your deliverer. Behold me a suppliant at your feet. Here on my knees, that never yet were bent to any mortal but yourself, do I beseech you by the love you profess for Agatha, by the gratitude you owe to me, by the duty you owe to yourself, to grant our suit, to put on this disguise, and accompany me instantly from the prison." She remained kneeling at his feet, her uplifted hands clasped together, her locks shaking as every

feature trembled with emotion, her eager eyes fixed imploringly upon his face.

“Why, why am I exposed to this harrowing trial?” said Forester, mournfully. “This indeed is the bitterest part of death, but I cannot meanly implicate you and Agatha; my public duty must be performed; my country calls for my life, and I must not, cannot, will not prove a recreant in this crisis of her doom. Agatha! Edith! this is my fiat—it is immutable, and I implore you, therefore, to leave me to my fate.”

Suddenly starting up, with flashing eyes and an inflamed countenance, Edith receded to the side of the room, and drawing a concealed dagger from her clothes, exclaimed, in a voice of desperation, “Hear me then, Forester! I told you that I had sworn to deliver you or to perish, and I will now fulfil my vow. Promise solemnly to comply with my wishes, promise to make the attempt at escaping, or I will stab myself to the heart before your face, and render you accountable for *my* death as well as your own. Nay, stir not a step. Agatha, I command you to keep aloof. If either of you move from your

position in the hope of disarming me, I will instantly plunge the steel into my heart."

At this moment the wainscot-pannel against which she was standing suddenly flew back, the governor of the prison, who had concealed himself behind it for the purpose of overhearing the conversation, seized her uplifted arm, and stepping into the room, exclaimed, "Come, come, my young virago, we will have none of these tragedy doings here, so give up your weapon. How! do you resist? Was ever such a passionate little termagant!" Edith struggled vehemently, but she was like a dove in the talons of the eagle; the dagger was wrenched from her grasp, and the exhausted girl, whose mind had been completely overwrought, sunk upon the floor in a violent fit of hysterics.

"I suspected some devil's plot or another the moment I heard two women were at the gate," resumed the governor addressing himself to Agatha. "I only gave you admittance for the purpose of discovering it, and you may now see why I have accommodated your friend with a wainscoted room. Come Madam, Miss, or

Molly, whichever you may be, troop off, troop, I say! and reckon yourself lucky that I don't give you a taste of the cat-o'-nine-tails for your pains. Master Forester's a slippery customer, I know, but if he gets out of this prison, afore he goes to be hanged, and that won't be long first, my name isn't Giles Hatch, that's all."

With these words he blew a whistle, when the turnkey and his assistant entered the room, and taking up the unconscious Edith in their arms, carried her off. Agatha, who had been supporting and assisting her friend, was sternly ordered to follow, a mandate which the struggle of irrepressible emotions would hardly allow her to obey. Her whole frame trembled violently, convulsive sobs threatened to suffocate her, she dared not trust herself to look at Forester, but stretching her hand towards him, endeavoured, although in vain, to pronounce an eternal adieu.

"Farewell, farewell for ever, best, noblest, most magnanimous of women!" passionately exclaimed Forester, pressing her hand to his lips and to his heart. "The sweet, the trans-

porting thought of meeting you in another world will cheer me in my last moments, and make my death an unalloyed triumph. Blessings, blessings on you both ! adieu ! adieu !”

He relinquished the almost lifeless hand—Agatha, scarcely able to support herself, was led away by the governor, who placed her in the carriage by the side of her insensible friend, and in this deplorable state, they were driven from the prison.

So intense and general was the interest excited by the lofty character of Forester, in connection with the celebrity he had acquired by his daring adventures and escapes, that on the following morning, when he was to be led forth to his trial, all the avenues of the prison, all the streets through which he was to pass, were thronged with spectators, while the crowd in the court-house was so dense, that it was with the utmost difficulty the prisoner and his attendants could cleave a passage to the bar. The calm undaunted bearing of the former, the manly beauty of his features, his noble figure, his youth, his romantic history, and the

certainly of his condemnation and inevitable death excited so profound a sympathy that many of the spectators, especially among the females, melted into tears as he passed along, although the object of their deep commiseration preserved a dignified and unshaken self-possession. To make assurance doubly sure, the Judge selected to try him, had been drilled in the ruffianly school of the judicial murderer Jeffreys, and was well-prepared either to entrap the prisoner, or to brow-beat and intimidate the Jury, should any legal subtlety afford them an excuse for acquitting him ; but Forester did not call for any exertion of his professional chicanery.

“ I will spare you, my Lord,” he exclaimed in a loud and firm voice, in answer to the question of ‘ Guilty, or not Guilty?’ “ I will spare you any farther display of your unquestionable talents in reversing the duties of your office, and acting as counsel against the prisoner, instead of becoming his advocate ; I will spare the Judicature of my country the disgrace of mocking justice by such a trial as was accorded

to Algernon Sidney and Lord Russell. In reply to your demand, I deem it a pride and honour to say,—guilty, my Lord, if it be guilt to maintain that the King is made for the nation, not the nation for the King,—to assert that the free-born people of this realm cannot become the patrimony of a profligate and tyrannical family,—to deny the right of any monarch to abrogate and alter at his own pleasure the laws, liberty, and religion of the country,—and to affirm that when he has thus violated his coronation oath, and broken faith with his people, it is their bounden duty to wrench the sceptre from his hand, and dash the crown from his head. Guilty, I say once more, my Lord, if it be guilt to proclaim that King James the Second has done all this and more, and to call upon the oppressed and insulted nation to exercise the holy right of insurrection, and to rise up ——”

“Audacious rebel! hold thy seditious tongue,” cried the Judge, starting up in an ungovernable rage: “take him away, gag him, let him not utter a syllable more; I have heard

too much already. He has pleaded guilty, and that is sufficient for our purpose ; away with him !”

The prisoner was hurried out of the court into an adjoining chamber : when the customary forms of law were completed, the Judge pronounced sentence of death, and ordered him for execution on the following morning, and the crowd dispersing, hastened into the streets in order to obtain one more glimpse of the condemned man as he returned to the gaol. Forester’s step was as firm, and his indomitable heart as fearless as ever ; but his features were flushed, partly with the heat of the court, partly with the excitation of his feelings during the short speech he had delivered, and his emotions were now kindled into a patriotic enthusiasm as he heard the whispered prayers and benedictions, and marked the fast-falling tears of the sympathizing spectators.

“ Weep not for me, my friends and fellow-countrymen,” he exclaimed, “ when you should rather envy and congratulate me upon my glorious fate. Not with one of the crowded

throng that now surround me, not with the happiest of the happy would I exchange conditions. Come to me, to-morrow morning; come all of you, to witness my triumph, to see how sweet, how glorious it is to die for one's country! My blood shall not be shed in vain: patriots and armed men springing up from the soil shall wage an eternal war with tyranny, and my disembodied spirit soaring to those blessed abodes where the foregone champions and martyrs of liberty are assembled, shall be enrolled among those inheritors of imperishable glory. Oh my beloved and illustrious friends, Sidney and Russell!"—continued the enthusiast uplifting his fettered hands towards the sky—"methinks I behold you in your Apotheosis, cinctured with the heroes of every age and clime who have dared and bled in the sacred cause of liberty,—Harmodius and Aristogiton, with their laurel-wreathed swords; Brutus, Cassius, and Cato; Tell of Switzerland; the Batavian De Witt, and the not less noble band of my own brave compatriots,—I see, I see them all! They stoop from the sky, they open wide

their arms to receive me ; and hark ! I hear their rejoicing welcome and their hymns of liberty ! Oh my glorified predecessors, I come, I come !”

In this strain of transported feeling he continued to apostrophise the departed champions of freedom, and to stimulate the spectators to an imitation of their heroic virtue, until he reached the prison, when he was re-committed to the room he had previously occupied, with the unpleasant accompaniment of a turnkey, who was ordered to remain with him, as an additional security until the time of his execution. During the remainder of the day his temporary excitation subsided into a calmer fortitude, and he employed himself in praying, in mentally arranging the dying address that he should deliver to the multitude, or in occasionally turning his thoughts to the generous and heroic attempt of his friends Agatha and Edith, and the agonizing state of distress in which he had seen them borne away from his presence. Only when he reverted to this latter subject did he feel his heart sink, and his firmness threaten to

desert him ; but the emotion was momentary, all his courage and magnanimity returning when he reflected how all-important it was that in the last crisis of his fate he should preserve a perfect self-possession, discharge his great duty in a becoming manner, and offer to the eyes of his assembled countrymen the example of a calm, a fearless, and even a cheerful devotement in the cause of liberty.

Far different was the scene exhibited at the lodgings to which Agatha and Edith had returned, after their expulsion by the gaoler. The result of the trial, and the tidings that the execution had been ordered for the following morning were quickly made known to the former ; but Edith's disordered faculties were no longer susceptible of any distinct impressions, and in her light-headed wanderings she did but rave wildly about Forester, launching vain menaces against his persecutors, and insisting with cries and struggles to be permitted to fly to his rescue. Agatha's feelings, witnessing the delirious misery of her friend, whom with the assistance of a female attendant she was obliged

to restrain by force, and knowing that every hour, as it fled rapidly away, brought nearer and still nearer the public execution of her lover, we will not attempt to pourtray. Such mental torture cannot even be referred to without pain ; to describe it is impossible.

CHAPTER VIII.

Here's a strange alteration in the Court ;
Men's faces are of other sets and motions,
Their minds of subtler stuff.

The False One.

You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need !
You see me here, you Gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age — wretched in both !

Lear.

MR. SHELTON, upon his arrival in London, soon learnt from his kinsman, one of the officers of the Court, that a pardon had already been dispatched for Walter Colyton, through the intercession of the Countess of Dorchester. In one object of his journey he was thus happily anticipated, and it only remained to obtain, if possible, an interview with the King, that he

might confess the participation of himself and his family in Forester's escape, and implore the royal clemency. "Although I am so immediately about his Majesty's person," said his kinsman, "it may be difficult to procure you an audience at this precise juncture, when he is not only out of health, both mentally and corporeally, but harassed with public business of the most anxious and distracting nature. A letter was lately presented to him by a special messenger from the French King, who was ordered to deliver it to no one but himself. No sooner had he perused it than he turned pale, he stood motionless, the paper dropped from his hand; as he picked it up he strove to conceal his perturbation, which only rendered it the more conspicuous, while I fear that myself and my companions in affecting not to observe him, betrayed that we did. We have since learnt that this letter conveyed intelligence of the Prince's great armament being indisputably destined for the invasion of England. The King, as he hastily left us, was seized with a violent bleeding at the nose, a malady that has

since recurred more than once, while his general health seems to be declining ; but he nevertheless pays incessant attention to public business, scarcely allowing himself the necessary hours of rest, and making preparations for defence with all the vigour of his former life. His principal reliance, however, is upon the elevation of the sacred Host, which he has ordered to be exposed for his protection during forty days ; while that which distresses and distracts him the most is the perpetual discovery of fresh treasons on the part of those in whom he placed the most implicit confidence, and upon whom he has heaped the most unmeasured favours. Sunderland is in the number of the suspected, and his public disgrace is daily anticipated. In fact, the King aware, at length, that the clouds which have been so long gathering from one end of Europe to another are preparing to burst upon his head, scarcely knows in whom to confide, or whom to distrust, what to hope, or what to fear,—an irresolution that occasions him to issue the most contradictory orders. All, in short, is suspicion, confusion and dismay.”

If such was the consternation at Court, the country at large was in a state of excitement not less signal and intense. None were any longer ignorant that the Dutch Armada was destined for England ; the general suspense occasioned by the embargo in the opposite ports, and the three weeks' prevalence of South-west winds, was heightened to a fever of impatience, a restless anxiety that totally suspended all the ordinary occupations of life on the part of those who took the smallest interest in public affairs. People met together at the markets and fairs less for the purpose of business, than to enquire the news, and discuss the probable fate of the nation. Some were hurrying up to the metropolis, others hastening in a contrary direction ; the Prince's partisans assembled and caballed with greater confidence as the hour of action approached ; many were providing themselves with arms, either for the purpose of self-defence, or that they might wield them in the cause of the Liberator ; troops were marching and countermarching through the provinces, the commanders of the towns were busily repairing

the fortifications, the fleet and army were increased with every possible expedition, expresses were speeding to and fro in all directions. But it was in London that the general agitation assumed its most decisive character. Abandoning all their customary employments, the citizens occupied themselves by day in talking of the news, or in looking from the windows and doors at the weathercocks; at night many arose from their beds to gratify their curiosity, and spent whole hours in the streets, frequently praying together for an East wind, which went at that time by the name of *the Protestant wind*. The clergy both of Holland and of Britain were at the same moment wearying Heaven with public prayers for the success or the disappointment of the respective Princes; while upon the populace, the vulgar and pointless ballad of Lilliburlero, becoming the catchword of the Protestant party, produced an effect much more powerful than is recorded of the Philippics of Demosthenes, or the harangues of Cicero, and almost justified the subsequent boast of Lord Wharton, its author, that he had

rhimed King James out of his dominions. The whole army were perpetually singing it; mobs paraded the streets shouting the same song, sometimes under the very walls of the palace; and when parties casually met, either in town or country, on the highway or beneath the roof of hospitality, they seldom failed to salute one another with the Protestant Pœan of "Lero, lero, lilli-burlero, lero, lero, bullen a-la!"

Even within the very walls of the palace, at the festive board, among the courtiers themselves, individuals were found who, deriving audacity from confidence of their royal master's approaching downfall, dared to insult him to his very face. At one of the suppers, a large ornamented dish in the centre of the table, being fashioned in the form of a castle, surmounted by a crown, some daring and disloyal hand, *whose* it was never known, placed an orange upon the castle, and put the crown upon the orange, to the utter confusion of the whole party when they came to seat themselves. James, who saw by their embarrassed looks that there was something amiss, presently discovered the ominous

emblem, and as suddenly turned pale and bit his lips, though he would not compromise his dignity by noticing it. Masking his indignation under an assumed indifference, he turned to speak to an attendant behind him, when one of the noble guests adroitly removed the obnoxious orange, replaced the crown, and the interrupted cheerfulness of the banquet was restored. Several of the bolder partisans of the Prince, who had lately absented themselves from court, now strutted about the painted chamber or the galleries, openly displaying some orange-coloured ribbon or appendage, the known badge of disaffection. At a subsequent period, when the intelligence arrived that Lord Cornbury and a part of the army had gone over to the invader, King James, in his own memoirs, thus touchingly complains of the insolence and ingratitude of his most favoured courtiers.—“And, indeed, many who remained at court could scarce contain showing to the world their inward pleasure on this occasion, for the express arriveing just as his Majesty was going to diner, his concern was too great to think of any thing but how to

remedy the comfortless situation of his affairs, so calling for a piece of bread and glass of wine, went immediately to consult what measures was fittest to be taken; at which time the Lords Sunderland, Churchil, and Godolphin, instead of compassionateing at least the anguish of so kind and bountiful a master, were seen unawares going hand in hand along the gallery, in the greatest transport of joy imaginable.”*

As hopes or fears prevailed, the vacillating measures of the King showed the perpetual oscillation of his mind. When the Dutch fleet was dispersed by the storm, it was at first reported in England that the greater part of the armament was lost. James received the news at dinner, and, with an appearance of great devotion, remarked, “It is not to be wondered at, for the Host has been exposed these several days.” In order to complete the deception, and make him lay aside his preparations, the Dutch Gazettes purposely aggravated the damage; the tidings were circulated with a blind and eager exultation by the Catholic party, who induced

* Memoirs, Vol. ii. p. 218.

the King to suspend his conciliatory measures, while a new arrogance inflated the priests and Jesuits, who had previously cowered before the coming storm. The recent concessions, thus evidently extorted by fear alone, rather served to excite contempt than to propitiate regard, while his present disposition to retract them inflamed the whole people with redoubled indignation. Let his overthrow come when it might, it was evident he would not fall like Cæsar; and the Monarch was already dethroned in the hearts of his people by having become an object of their scorn and hatred.

The crisis of his fate was now rapidly approaching. The Prince of Orange having repaired and collected his vast armament, was on the point of sailing a second time, when violent disputes broke out among his English auxiliaries as to the mode of conducting the invasion. "Gentlemen," said the Prince, "this is not the time for argument or discussion, and still less for delay. I require obedience now, not advice. I am the commander of this expedition; I have decided my plan; my orders

must not be disputed.” The stern decision of his manner confirmed this declaration, “and the men who had refused obedience to their own Prince because he had not their esteem, willingly gave up their opinion to that of another, although a foreigner, because he possessed it.”*

On the first of November the armament sailed a second time, amidst the sounds of trumpets and artillery, the shouts and acclamations of the soldiers and mariners, and the prayers of the vast multitude that crowded the surrounding shores. On the second morning the fleet was discovered stretching towards the Channel, with all sail spread, forming a line of twenty miles in extent. “During seven hours this huge body continued passing in the view of both shores, which were covered with innumerable spectators, who stood gazing with admiration, mixed with terror, upon a spectacle at once so pleasing and so dreadful; and who loaded it with prayers or imprecations according to the different religions, interests, or passions of the nations before whom it passed.

* Dalrymple.

When the fleet approached the coast of England, the Prince changed his ship, and sailed at the head of all, to be the foremost in danger, displaying his own standard, in order to make himself more conspicuous, and to animate others by his example. It was resolved to change the disposition of the fleet: while this evolution was performing, the trumpets and other warlike instruments again sounded, the vessels saluted, and all the honours and pomp of war were exhibited in the sight of the people who were assembled on the coasts. The Prince having arrived in Torbay, was anxious to land on the fourth of November, because it was the day of his birth and of his marriage; but the English rejoiced that the landing could not be made effectual until the day after, which being the anniversary of the Gunpowder Treason, they imagined would prove a lucky day to a Protestant cause. As soon as the debarkation was made good, the whole fleet and army joined in expressing their gratitude by prayers to that Providence which they believed had interposed in their favour.”*

* Dalrymple.

In three days, the Prince set forward with all the pomp and parade of war, the following, according to the account of a contemporary, being the order of his march as he left Chudleigh :—

“ 1. The Right Honourable the Earl of Mordaunt, with two hundred horse, the most part of which were English gentlemen, richly mounted on Flanders steeds, managed and used to war, in head-pieces, back and breast bright armour.

“ 2. Two hundred Blacks brought from the plantations in America, having embroidered caps lined with white fur, and plumes of white feathers, to attend the horse.

“ 3. Two hundred Finlanders or Laplanders in bear-skins, taken from the wild beasts they had slain, the common habit of that cold climate, with black armour, and broad flaming swords.

“ 4. Fifty gentlemen and as many pages to attend and support the Prince's banner, bearing the inscription—*God and the Protestant Re-*

ligion, followed by fifty led horse, all managed to the wars, with two grooms to each.

“ 5. After these rode the Prince on a milk white palfrey, armed *cap-à-pié*, a plume of white feathers on his head, all in bright armour, and forty-two footmen running by him.

“ 6. After his Highness followed likewise on horseback, two hundred gentlemen and pages, three thousand Switzers with fusees, five hundred Volunteers, each two led horses:—his Captain and Guards, six hundred, armed *cap-à-pié*—and the rest of the army brought up the rear.”

This military array, not less magnificent than formidable, was received wherever it passed with the loud acclamations of the assembled neighbourhood, while the news of the landing spread with the rapidity of wild-fire through the whole country, occasioning many armed bands to collect together for the support of the Liberator, and throwing every thing into confusion. At Orchard Place the family had been plunged into great distress owing to the unexplained

disappearance of Agatha and Edith, until a letter from a friend of Agatha's at Exeter, announced the failure of the attempt to deliver Forester, and her intention of returning home as soon as Edith was sufficiently recovered to be able to travel. This communication removed much of their previous anxiety; but the approach of an invading army awoke fresh alarms in the bosom of Mrs. Colyton, who began to fear that her house and grounds might be devastated a second time by the troopers; nor did she at present know which party to espouse, not having yet made up her mind which would eventually triumph. In this uncertainty she determined on removing to Bridgwater, where their conduct would be less liable to observation, leaving Mapletoft, who hated moving, and who was too much absorbed in his own pursuits to trouble his head about the contending parties, to take care of the property, and answer enquiries at Orchard Place.

No sooner had the Prince of Orange landed in Torbay, than, being apprised by public report that Stanley Forester, one of the most active

and daring of his adherents, was lying in prison at Exeter, under expectation of immediate trial and quickly following execution, he instantly dispatched an officer of rank, accompanied by a trumpeter, with a letter to the civil and military authorities of the town, warning them upon peril of their lives not to execute any sentence that might be passed upon the prisoner, and adding that he should quickly follow his messenger with his whole army. The morning appointed for the execution had arrived, a detachment of troops had been stationed from the hour of daylight in front of the prison, the civil force were in attendance, every arrangement had been made to give publicity and solemnity to the occasion, and a deeply commiserating crowd had already begun to collect around the scaffolding, watching in anxious silence these fearful preparations for the coming tragedy, when the loud blast of a trumpet echoed through the narrow streets, startling every ear, and an officer in a foreign uniform, mounted on a foaming horse, galloped to the residence of the Mayor. A thousand con-

jectures were instantly afloat, and the buzzing multitude hurried backwards and forwards from the Mayoralty to the prison, anticipating some important event without being able to guess at its nature. Putting his own safety before all other considerations, the Judge who had condemned Forester, fled from Exeter the moment he learnt the arrival of the invading army. In this emergency the Mayor and the military commander, neither of whom had the smallest wish to compromise their heads, and who, in fact, were both better affected to the Prince than to their legitimate Sovereign, determined on deferring the execution, still keeping their prisoner in safe custody. For their own protection, however, they wrote to London to demand fresh instructions, trusting that before they could get an answer, the arrival of the Prince's army would take all power out of their own hands, and absolve them from ultimate responsibility. This resolution being quickly made known by the removal of the scaffolding, intended for the execution, the delighted mob ran tumultuously through the streets, uttering

disaffected cries, or shouting in dissonant chorus the popular burthen of "Lero, lero, lilliburlero, lero, lero, bullen a-la!"

Leaving Chudleigh in the magnificent array that we have already recorded, the invading Prince, on the same day, made his triumphal entry into Exeter, where he was received with loud acclamations of welcome. Cold as he was by nature, William's policy or principle so far supplied the place of more generous impulse, that ingratitude towards his friends has never been reckoned among his failings. His first measure, after his arrival in Exeter, was to order the instant liberation of Forester, whom he received and welcomed in the most distinguished manner, publicly thanking him afresh for all his perilous exertions in his service, and congratulating him on his escape. "For my own deliverance I am most grateful," said Forester, "but it is of secondary importance in my eyes when compared with that of my beloved country, whose civil and religious emancipation is now, as I trust, effectually secured by the happy arrival of your Highness. The

poor services to which you allude were rendered to your Highness as the future Liberator of England, in which capacity I still willingly hold my life at your disposal."

After remaining for some time closeted with the Prince in consultation upon the subsequent measures to be adopted, Forester accepted a confidential appointment, which placed his services in instant requisition, and then hurried into the town, to inquire whether Agatha and Edith still remained at their lodgings. Finding that they had not yet departed, he rushed into the room where they were seated, and a scene ensued of tenderness and transport, of vehement agitation and ineffable ecstasy, such as we shall not attempt to describe. Edith, who, up to this period, had been either in an unconscious lethargy, or a state of mental alienation, was electrified at his sight, and uttering a loud scream of joy, welcomed him with recovered sanity, and a passionate burst of tears; while Agatha's delight, though less ecstatic, was scarcely less intense than that of her friend. In mutual congratulations, in reno-

vated vows of indelible gratitude on the part of Forester, and in that delicious intercommunion of heart and sentiment, which may be supposed to be shared by three persons thus suddenly snatched from the abyss of despair, and raised to the pinnacle of immediate felicity, some hours passed rapidly away, when Forester declared that he was compelled, however reluctantly, to tear himself from their society. “Supreme and exquisite as is the happiness I am now enjoying,” he exclaimed — “I must not, cannot sacrifice to it a single hour of my public duty. I have set my hand to the plough; I have solemnly dedicated myself to the regeneration of my degraded country; every thing must give way to the accomplishment of this sacred vow. The Prince has commissioned me to precede the army, that I may confer with his partisans in the interior, and arrange the plan of his advance. England’s liberation achieved, not a moment shall I lose in speeding back to renew this delightful intercourse, and to claim from one of my fair preservers, if the hope be not deemed presumptuous, the surpass-

ing reward of all my dangers and anxieties."— Looking tenderly at Agatha as he spoke, he pressed her hand to his lips, and bade her an affectionate adieu ; after which, he took leave of Edith in the same manner, and invoking a fervent benediction upon both, hurried out of the apartment.

CHAPTER IX.

I treated, trusted you, and thought you mine ;
When in requital of my best endeavours,
You treacherously practised to undo me.

OTWAY.

They will not hear me speak, but fling dirt at me, and call me tyrant. Oh! run, dear friend, and bring the Lord Philaster ; speak him fair, call him Prince, do him all the courtesy you can, commend me to him. Oh my wits, my wits!

PHILASTER.

THE King's incessant engagements, harassed as he was by the perpetual arrival of couriers from all parts of the kingdom, each bringing still more disastrous intelligence than his predecessor, coupled with the intriguing, the bustle, and the consternation, that made the whole Court one scene of confusion, had prevented Mr.

Shelton from obtaining an interview. Never had Whitehall been so thronged with nobility and gentry, both from town and country ; never were professions of loyalty so fulsome, so abject, so impassioned ; never were oaths of fealty more solemn ; never had there been exhibited a corruption, a baseness, a falsehood, an hypocrisy, so concurrent and so shameless. As the Prince of Orange advanced towards the capital, the great, who had been intriguing with him, employed themselves in burning the papers that might compromise them, and then hurried to the throne with the most lavish professions of unshaken and immutable attachment. They who were deepest engaged in the treason were loudest in swearing they would shed the last drop of their blood in the Royal cause ; many had the effrontery to send up proffers of service, who were actually levying recruits for the Invader ; and several of the military officers, who, when they kissed hands on departing to their respective commands, swore to drive the invader back, or to perish in the attempt, were the very first to desert to him. To such an

extent did others carry their duplicity, that in the Royal hearing, as if their expressions were dropped undesignedly, they would heap the most injurious terms upon the Invader, laughing in their sleeves, or joking with one another as they retired, in the hope that they had assisted to delude their Sovereign into a false security. Others there were, who, having latterly absented themselves from Court, now returned to it, for the ungenerous purpose of enjoying the King's humiliation, and venting sarcasms against his conduct. Among these was the witty Sir Charles Sedley, a notorious Orange partisan, who, upon this occasion, uttered his memorable jest, that since the King had made his daughter a Countess, he was bound in common gratitude to do all he could to make the King's daughter a Queen. In the counterfeit spirit of outrageous loyalty, to which we have just alluded, were framed all the public addresses from towns and counties, which almost unanimously declared for the Prince the moment they could do so with safety; while religion itself was made a better cover for dis-

simulation on the part of those who had become pretended converts to the Catholic faith, that they might the better advance themselves, and cajole the monarch. James, whose superstition led him to believe that miracles might be wrought by relics, and who, as human means seemed to fail him, looked the more anxiously for Divine interference, had ordered some sprigs of the holy thorn of Glastonbury, to be sent up to him, one of which he constantly wore in his button-hole. Sunderland, and others of the pseudo-Catholic party, did the same, affecting in the Royal presence a pious reverence for this imagined charm, while among themselves they contemptuously taunted their master for his credulity.

Encouraged, in some degree, in spite of the numerous ascertained defections, by these fervent professions of unlimited devotion to his cause, the unhappy James, summoning up that courageous spirit which had hitherto never failed him, joined his army at Salisbury, declaring that if he could not defend his crown, he would die King of England. At this town, however,

he remained six days only, becoming gradually so distracted by the hourly announcement of fresh misfortunes, the discovery of new treasons, his distrust even of his nearest connexions, the bold, not to say insolent language, that now for the first time met his ears, and the apprehension of a plot on the part of some of the officers to make him a prisoner in his own camp, and deliver him over to the Prince, that his bodily health gave way, his courage suddenly deserted him, never fully to return in after-life, and he resolved to hasten back to London. The night before he left the camp, Prince George of Denmark, his son-in-law, and the young Duke of Ormond, whom he had lately honoured with the Garter, supped with him : next morning he was waked, to be told that they and other noblemen had gone over in the night to the Prince. On this occasion, seeking to conceal the agony of his mind by an attempt at pleasantry, he applied a contemptuous nickname to the Prince, who had even overacted the part of a loyalist, adding, that the loss of a good trooper would have been more severely felt.

But the blow was not to be thus parried. Hurt in friendship, and in the relations of nature, shocked with ingratitude, suspecting all, and most with good reason, and dreading to be delivered up by his own troops, he remained plunged in a miserable bewilderment and dejection, though he still endeavoured to preserve an appearance of firmness. When, however, upon his reaching the capital, he learned that his daughter, the Princess Anne, had fled from the palace on the preceding evening, with the Bishop of London, Lord Dorset, and Lady Churchill; when, in addition to his dearest and most favoured personal friends, he thus found that his two daughters and his two sons-in-law, one of whom was moreover his nephew, were ranged against him as enemies, he burst into tears, and, in a transport of nature, uttered his pathetic and well-known exclamation — “God help me, my own children have forsaken me !” So paramount, however, in his mind was his blind reverence for the head of the Catholic Church, that on the same evening he sent for Barillon, informing him with satisfaction, that

by letters from Lord Thomas Howard, he found the Pope had accepted his mediation in the affair of the Franchises.

Although Mr. Shelton no longer wished to see the King on the affair of Forester, which subsequent and infinitely more important events had deprived of all interest, he was still anxious to appear at Court, and show some respect, in this his hour of adversity, to his afflicted Sovereign. However he might condemn him as a monarch, he could not avoid compassionating him as a man; nor could he view without some feelings of indulgence, his religious zeal, which though it might be wretchedly misguided, was at least sincere, and had already entailed its own abundant punishment. He was expressing these sentiments, and discoursing on the menacing aspect of affairs with his kinsman, Ralph Shelton, as they sate together in a small antechamber that communicated with the royal apartments, at a moment when all the precincts of the palace and the circumjacent streets were crowded with the populace, some venting execrations on the priests, others parading turbu-

lently about with oranges stuck on the ends of sticks and weapons, some few pitying the King, but the greater number vociferating the obnoxious song of Lilliburlero. James, in the meanwhile, a sort of prisoner in his own palace, stripped of the powers of his mind by the noise of popular tumult, the incessant announcement of fresh calamities, the harassing conflict of factions that surrounded him, and his fears for the safety of the Queen and his infant son, as well as for himself, wandered from room to room in a pitiable state of agony. He had this morning received intelligence that his bosom friend and favourite Lord Churchill,* had gone over to the enemy,—an unexpected blow that stung him to the very quick, superseding for the moment every other grief. Thus hurrying, half unconsciously, from one part of his palace to another, he entered the room in which the Sheltons were conversing, and, starting as he recognized the man whom he had not long since dismissed from his presence with such stern

* Afterwards the famous Duke of Marlborough.

rebuke, he exclaimed — “ Ha ! Mr. Shelton, have you ventured hither again, in spite of —— Ah ! you are a good man, a sincere man, I believe it, I am sure of it, though almost all mankind seem to be faithless. Alas ! alas ! it would have been well had I followed your suggestions, but I was surrounded with false advisers, who with hellish art entangled me in a web of treason, perfidy, fraud, falsehood, and dissimulation as black and crooked as —— Good Heavens ! Lord Churchill gone over to the enemy ! That the Duke of Grafton, that Colonels Kirk and Trelawney, his companions, should desert, moves me not ; but Lord Churchill ! Why, from his very boyhood I have been his friend and patron—I have raised him from nothing ; I never refused him a favour—I heaped honours and dignities upon him unasked—when we were shipwrecked together in the Gloucester frigate, I compelled the boat to put back, at the imminent risk of my own life, that I might save his. Lord Churchill ! the atrocious hypocrite ! did he not urge me, when

Colonel Beaumont and his captains refused to receive the Irish recruits, to have them instantly shot? I now see the villain's motive; it was to make me odious to the army; he would have gladly sacrificed his brother officers to injure his benefactor! Lord Churchill! did he not importune me, torment me, at Salisbury, only the very day before his desertion, to advance and fight the Prince? I see through this too. He would have deprived thousands of his countrymen of their lives, without the smallest compunction, if so he might more effectually destroy the friend who had saved his own. Now may I indeed cry out with holy David, 'Oh! if my enemies only had cursed me, I could have borne it;' but Lord Churchill! *Sancte Johannes Baptista, ora pro nobis!*"

Agitated and distressed, the King crossed himself devoutly, and as he walked along the room muttered in an earnest whisper, "*Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam,*" when turning abruptly to Ralph Shelton he inquired whether the Host had been cer-

tainly exposed every day as he had ordered. An answer was given in the affirmative. "It is well—it is well," continued James; "Sennacherib's army was strong, but it was overthrown in one night by the destroying angel of the Lord. It would much console me, nevertheless, could I offer up my prayers at the shrine of Holywell in Wales, where my intercessions last year certainly procured the pregnancy of the Queen; but this may not be. *Sancta Maria!* How far will the Protestants carry their religious antipathy? Am I to be hunted down like a wild beast? What a diabolical calumny to assert that I and the Queen could attempt to impose a child upon the nation! Is it likely that I, who have suffered so much for conscience sake, could be capable of so great a villainy to the prejudice of my own children. I thank God those that know me, know very well that it is my principle to do as I would be done by, for that is the Law and the Prophets; and that I would rather die a thousand deaths than do the least wrong to any of my chil-

dren.”*—— After walking to and fro several times in a perturbed manner, the Monarch suddenly stopped, and continued, “Gentlemen, it is a comfort to me to know that those of my own faith, I include not the pretended converts, have mostly been staunch to me, and I trust they will remain so. The violation of all the dearest and most sacred ties of nature, the horrible ingratitude, the infamous corruption, the diabolical falsehood and treachery, the perjuries and blasphemies, the monstrous, unnatural, and irreligious acts which have been perpetrated in the name of religion, and of which I have been made the victim, are these Protestant piety, Protestant morality, Protestant loyalty, Protestant honour? Gentlemen, let us thank Heaven that we are Catholics.” Again crossing himself he hurried out of the room, ejaculating portions of Latin prayer, occasionally pronouncing with indignant emphasis the name of Lord Churchill, or, as his fears predominated over his anger, muttering to himself a saying of his royal father,

* The King’s own words in his Diary, vol. ii. p. 202.

that "small was the distance between the prisons of princes and their graves."

Yielding to the importunities of the Queen, who had been reminded of the impeachment of the King's mother, as well as the intention to impeach the late Queen, and who was haunted moreover with perpetual apprehensions that her husband might share the fate of his father, James had at length consented that she should withdraw with their infant son to France. Not only, however, did the solitude of the palace now become insupportable, but the presence of his courtiers, in each of whom he feared a betrayer, and found in every look confirmation of his suspicions, was equally uneasy to him. For the purpose of accelerating his flight, Lord Hallifax gave him false intelligence that his person was in immediate danger; a device that completed his panic, and induced him to make arrangements for his departure with a precipitation and pusillanimity hardly to have been expected in one who had hitherto been so stern, inflexible, and haughty. On the evening before

he left the palace, he affected, in order to mask his design, an unusual serenity, issuing public orders for a review of the Guards next morning, directing a Council to be summoned on the following day, expressing confident hopes of an amicable accommodation with the Prince's Commissioners, and endeavouring for once to deceive those who had practised such continual and complicated deception towards himself. One of his last acts was to give the Diary, which from his earliest youth he had been accustomed to keep, to the ambassador of Tuscany, the Count of Therese, by whose means the papers were sent to Italy, and subsequently found their way to the Scotch College at Paris.* At three o'clock in the morning, attended by Sir Edward Hales and

* About the beginning of the French revolution the original MSS. were sent to St. Omer, secreted in a cellar, afterwards buried in the garden of a country-house, and finally taken up and destroyed; but their contents had been previously collected, and formed into a life of James the Second, which, with other papers termed the Stuart Manuscripts, were published in 1816, by the Rev. J. S. Clarke, 2 Vols. 4to.

two servants, James left the palace of his ancestors by a private passage, entered a hackney-coach, was driven to the horse-ferry opposite Vauxhall, and crossed the river, into which he cast the great seal of England, hoping, with a characteristic narrowness of thought, to throw the whole empire into confusion by destroying a mere symbol of authority.

No sooner was his flight made public, than the populace, finding themselves free from the restraint of government, and inspired with that religious zeal which exhibits itself in a love of violence and plunder, set fire to or demolished the Popish chapels, committed outrages on the priests, and rifled the houses of several Popish ambassadors. By the accounts that Mr. Shelton had received from Agatha, now residing with the Colytons at Bridgwater, he found that the invading army had not only plundered Hales Court, and killed his deer, but had carried off his horses without paying for them; a favour which they invariably conferred upon the Catholics, although they paid punctually for every thing belonging to Protestants; thus

setting an example which the populace in other quarters failed not to imitate. Coupling this spoliation with the cruelties and excesses committed by the London mob, he feared that no Papist would much longer possess any security in England, either for his property or life. Indeed, he believed that when the new government came to be organized, they would be all ordered out of the Kingdom as a concession to popular prejudice, perhaps with a confiscation of their effects; under which apprehensions he deemed it most prudent to anticipate the coming storm, to convert his fortune into money with as little delay as possible, and to accompany his kinsman, who had already intimated his intention of following his royal master, to France. These measures he proceeded to carry into immediate execution, writing to Father Bartholomew to take charge of Agatha, and to bring her up to London, but to put off his priestly garments and to conceal the fact of their being Papists, lest they should be exposed to insult or interruption. By the aid of these precautions, highly necessary in such times of

turbulence, they reached London without any molestation. Rumours of a Popish massacre had thrown the whole city into a frenzy of dismay, but as Mr. Shelton thought it much more likely that the handful of terrified Catholics remaining in the metropolis, would be the victims rather than the perpetrators of such an enormity, and that the entry of the Prince's army might not improbably be the signal for its execution, he was determined to withdraw before that event took place. He did so accordingly, travelled to the coast, knowing that every vessel passing down the river was searched, embarked on board a trader with his daughter and Father Bartholomew, arrived safely in France, and proceeded to St. Germain, where he had determined to station himself in the first instance, not solely from feelings of compassionate respect towards his unhappy Sovereign, but that he might enjoy the society of his kinsman, and other of his friends who were now assembled in that town.

Forester, in the mean while, indefatigable in executing his commission, and animated with

a patriotic enthusiasm that became daily more ardent as the certainties of success increased, traversed the country in all directions, stimulating the timid, confirming the bold, and communicating to all the impulse of his own energy. At Hungerford he rejoined the Prince, who had received the visits of the great with a courtesy that was rather politic than natural, and who, as he marched along, frequently bowed to the populace with his hat off, calling out to them that he came to rescue their religion and liberty. At the last mentioned town the King's deputies presented to him proposals for an adjustment, in a letter from James, which being merely official, had been written in French, and not with his own hand. On reading it, the Prince exclaimed with an air of pretended concern, that it was the first letter he had ever received from the King written in a foreign language, or by the hand of another ; as if his sensibilities were wounded at the smallest appearance of coldness on the part of the near and dear relation whom he came to expel from his throne and from his country. So little did

the phlegmatic William know even when to assume the virtue of tenderness! All Princes, however, are capable of a real sympathy with those of their own rank, and when some of his advisers counselled violent measures against the King, after the return of the latter from Fever-sham, William slighted the suggestion, and discountenanced its authors. Forester, with the generosity and kindness natural to a brave man, compassionated the fallen monarch who had so recently signed an order for his instant execution, and invariably urged the propriety of treating him with every considerate respect, consistent with the public weal. Love of the kingdom, not hatred of the King; the liberation of the oppressed, not the destruction of the oppressor; had been his governing principles of action, and he was the more gratified therefore when James's voluntary abdication promised the realization of all his patriotic wishes without a civil war, with very little comparative disturbance, and without the smallest personal injury to the mistaken and misguided monarch. Upon one remarkable occasion he was mainly

instrumental in preventing the effusion of blood. Fearing that some opposition might be offered to the first detachment of Dutch troops, which with drums beating, matches lighted, and in order of battle, had been commanded to march through the Park at eleven o'clock at night, he accompanied them. The brave Lord Craven who commanded the Guards, though now seventy years of age, refused to give way, drew up his men, and prepared to die at their head ; an act of generous but useless devotion, which might have entailed the most tragical consequences, but for Forester's prompt interference, who prevailed upon the sturdy old nobleman to accompany him to Whitehall, where he received peremptory orders to retire,—a command which both the commander and his men obeyed with menacing looks and unwilling hearts. Upon this occasion only, when it became his imperative duty, did Forester visit the palace, motives of delicacy prompting him to keep studiously aloof from even the chance of encountering the King.

Accident, however, defeated this intention.

On his return in a boat from the Tower, whither he had been dispatched with orders, he met the fallen Monarch, now again quitting London after having been brought back from Feversham, and going with some appearance of state, but in reality as a prisoner, to Rochester. On this occasion James's servants, who were now looking to new masters, left him in his barge an hour after he was ready, by which he missed the tide, and did not arrive at Gravesend till three hours after sunset in December. The Dutch foot guards in open boats rowed before and behind him, and as Forester, who had muffled himself up to avoid recognition, caught a glimpse of the King's haggard features, he felt forcibly, and with a touch of sadness, the instability of all human things. He himself so lately ordered for execution, was now at liberty, gazing on the captive monarch who had signed his death-warrant. To the Tower, before which James was passing, the Skelton, whom he had recently committed a prisoner, and subsequently made its Governor, was now again consigned as a prisoner ; Lord Delamere, whom he had formerly

sent twice to the same place, had brought him a message to depart from his own palace; and out of more than twelve millions of subjects, only five friends, and not one of his own family, attended him on the present melancholy occasion. As Forester pondered on this affecting reverse, a tear stole down his cheek, nor did he attempt to check his emotions; "I would have shed the last drop of my blood," he exclaimed, "to hurl the oppressor from his throne; but I cannot refuse a tear to the miseries of the parent and the man. May all future Kings learn from this terrible example that they cannot with impunity invade the religion or the liberties of Britain!"

Naturally taciturn and reserved, William seldom entered into familiar discourse with his friends, especially at the present juncture, and upon the ticklish subject of politics. To Forester, however, partly in consideration of his services and the perils he had encountered, partly because he was almost the only individual whom he had hitherto found to be truly disinterested and patriotic, he opened himself

more unreservedly than to others. Of this privilege Forester availed himself to urge most strenuously the intolerance and injustice of the severe enactments against the Catholics, which disgraced the newly achieved triumph of constitutional liberty. "It is a question of policy, rather than of abstract justice," said William; "I am as staunch a friend to freedom of conscience as yourself, but I must yield to the exigency of circumstances, and to the stubborn prejudices of the nation. On the subject of toleration, and particularly as it affects the Papists, the English are behind the rest of Europe, and will probably long remain so. In more tranquil and enlightened times some fortunate benefactor of his country, accomplishing what I dare not attempt, may annul the statutes which we are now framing; may show the people the utter absurdity of their fears, and by throwing down the bugbear which bigotry and ignorance have set up, may enable all the subjects of England to gather in peace the fruits of love, brotherhood, and universal toleration. This is the noblest and most legitimate aim of religion."

As if it were destined that Forester should be gratified in the relations of private life, as much as he was delighted by the success of his patriotic exertions for the public, his father, hurrying up from the country, voluntarily sought a reconciliation. Sir Miles, a mere man of the world, had ostentatiously repudiated and disinherited the proclaimed traitor, with the sordid motive of keeping on the winning side, and of avoiding those heavy fines and confiscations which might have been imposed upon him were he suspected of communicating with the outlaw; but when he saw his son's sentence reversed; when he found that he was the theme of universal admiration, in high favour with the Sovereign, and likely to partake in those honours and emoluments which were so liberally bestowed upon the Orange partisans; the same calculating spirit made him come forward to reinstate him in his will, and restore him to favour, in the hope that he might thereby obtain some share of the royal favour for himself. Forester, who was sincerely attached to his father, though he had never suffered filial interests to interfere

with his public duty, rejoiced in this happy change, and to the great delight of Sir Miles, presented him to William, who told him that he should ever hold him in regard for the sake of his gallant son.

Let it not be supposed that the heroic youth, however ardent might be his zeal in the great cause to which he was devoted, had consummated his patriotic vow without reverting often, and with the yearning of an impassioned heart, to his beloved Agatha. Having learnt, immediately upon his arrival in London, that her father had taken her to France, a measure which in the then existing exasperation against the Catholics he could not condemn, he wrote her a letter, declaring in a strain of exalted fervour that she had long possessed his undivided affections, and making her a formal tender of his hand. In this appeal, recalling the scene that had passed between them in his sick-room, before his escape from Hales Court, he said, "The glorious contingency which I then ventured to anticipate, and which you treated as the dream of a sanguine enthusiast, is now more

than accomplished. My solemn vow is fulfilled, the liberties and constitution of England are re-established, I am no longer an alien and an out-cast, no longer a disguised and disinherited wanderer ; the sentence passed upon me has been reversed, I am honoured by my King, reconciled to my father, respected by the brave and the good, and elated by the public part I have acted, because, as I fervently hope, it will give me some title to the still prouder distinction of meriting your regard, without which I feel, with a daily, an hourly increasing conviction, that I can have no chance of happiness. Your enchanting confession that I was not indifferent to you, has cheered me in perils and extremities, even enabling me to contemplate with complacency the uplifted dart of death. Oh ! let the realization of the beatific vision it has conjured up gladden the remainder of a life which shall henceforth be devoted to the sweetest of all duties, to the reciprocation of the happiness you will thus bestow !”

Regretting the impossibility of his proceeding to St. Germain on account of the delicate posi-

tion in which he stood, both with reference to James and William, he enquired in his letter what were Mr. Shelton's future plans, urging the return of the family to England, with a pledge for their perfect safety, but promising that if they moved to any other town in France, where the motives of his visit could not be misinterpreted, he would instantly join them, and await the decision which was to disappoint all his hopes, or to crown him with supreme felicity.

Love, however, did not supersede in his mind the considerations of gratitude and friendship. At the same time he dispatched letters to Edith and Walter Colyton, expressing in the most ardent terms the gratitude that remained indelibly graven upon his heart, and assuring them that he would hasten into Somersetshire to renew his acknowledgments in person, as soon as he could obtain leave of absence from William, who had intimated a wish that he should not leave the Court in the present crisis, although he held no official appointment of any sort. Two days after he had forwarded this letter, he saw, to his no

small surprise, among those who were going up to be presented at a levee, Squire Colyton himself, flaming in a new court-dress, while his virginal, good-humoured face was set off to advantage by a full-bottomed wig. His spouse, in whose economical mind the loss of Walter's outfit perpetually rankled, and who made sure that the tender of service which she had prompted her husband to write to the Prince soon after his landing would ensure the success of his application, dispatched him to London to solicit his son's re-instatement in the army, pluming herself not a little on the Machiavelian skill which had dictated the politic letter to the Prince, and suggested the present mode of deriving advantage from it. A list of the gentlemen to be presented had been previously delivered to William, who, when the Squire came up, demanded with a stern look and voice,—“Are you Jaspar Colyton, of Orchard Place, near Bridgwater?”

The Squire bowed assent, taking care to add, as he had been duly tutored by his wife, that he had done himself the honour of writing to offer

his poor services while his Highness was at Exeter.

“Which letter,” resumed William, frowning, “you will probably find at St. Germain. I return you that which has been addressed to me by mistake.” He took a letter from a pocket-book, opened it, delivered it to the Squire, and waving his hand said, “You may withdraw, Sir, nor need you again present yourself at Court.”

Dumfounded at such an unexpected dismissal, the Squire retired through the line of buzzing courtiers, nor was it until he reached the outer gallery that he sufficiently recovered himself to cast his eye upon the letter, when the mystery was solved at once, by his discovering that it was in his own hand-writing, and the identical one he had addressed to King James, professing unbounded loyalty, and condemning the Prince’s conduct in no very measured terms. How it should have come into William’s possession remained still an enigma, until, upon turning over the *envelope*, he found that his managing, or rather his mismanaging spouse, who had been

afraid to trust him with the conduct of this little intrigue, had directed and forwarded to William the letter intended for his rival ; nor did he now doubt the assertion that he might find at St. Germain's the one originally destined for the Prince of Orange. Conscious of the taunts and ridicule to which he would be liable by this exposure of his clumsiness, for as to the double dealing he shared it with half the world, he set off next day upon his return to Somersetshire, having no other consolation than that he should be enabled to twit his spouse for the remainder of his life with this new proof of her talent for manœuvring ; a talent which had not only destroyed all hopes of Walter's re-instatement, but had put himself to the additional expense of a journey to London, besides a new court-suit, and a full-bottomed wig.

His disaster, which afforded infinite amusement to those courtiers, who, though not a whit more honest, knew better how to play the knave, soon reached the ears of Forester, reminding him that no one could now interfere in the affair of Walter with a better chance of success than

himself. He requested therefore a private audience of William, which was readily granted.

“ I am glad to have a *tête-à-tête* with you,” said the King (for such he had now become), “ since I guess its purpose. I requested you not to leave my Court at present, always meaning to bestow upon you some distinction, that might mark my sense of your signal services, but waiting in the hope that you might point out to me what was most consonant to your own taste and wishes. If this is the object of your present audience, I think I may venture to promise beforehand a compliance with your request, unless it be of a very exorbitant nature.”

“ Your Majesty’s partisans have had honours and dignities unsparingly showered upon them ; they have been rewarded in a manner rather suited to the munificence of the donor than to their own deserts ; and yet I venture to claim one honour, one distinction, which none has hitherto been enabled to boast.”

“ Indeed ! what may that be ? ” inquired William, with a grave look.

“ The pride and satisfaction of knowing, that as I sought the downfall of the late King, without the fear of punishment, so have I promoted the accession of your Majesty without the hope of reward, beyond that great and all-sufficing recompense which I have obtained in witnessing the disenthralment of my country, and the establishment of her liberties upon a firm and immutable basis. This is all the distinction I claim, but I feel it to be a proud one.”

“ And this I ought to have expected of you,” said the King graciously ; “ but I have found such greedy, such sordid selfishness, where I had been accustomed to hear the loudest professions of disinterested patriotism, that I scarcely know in whose purity to confide.”

“ I can easily believe that this covetousness and inconsistency on the one side, coupled with the insight which your Majesty must have obtained into the clamorous protestations of universal loyalty that preceded the general defection from the late King, may have lowered our nation in your eyes ; nor can I deny, that the Revolution, however glorious to your Majesty,

however blessed in its results, may be hereafter deemed dishonourable to the people of England in the mode of its achievement. But the Stuarts are only the victims of the general corruption they themselves effected. At the time of the Restoration, high-minded Puritans of the Hutchinson and Ludlow stamp were still living, men who might have strengthened the public mind by imparting to it their own morality and strict religious tone, even as the Goths, when they intermingled with the degenerate people of Italy, corroborated their bodily strength. But in the reign of Charles the Second, drunkenness, irreligion, immorality, and corruption, became tests of loyalty ; and the people at large soon learned to imitate, though they could not surpass, the gross depravity of the Court. Charles and his successor were both pensioners of France ; both secretly leagued with a foreign despot against their subjects ; and they can have no right therefore to complain when the people turned the stream of corruption, and entered into conspiracies against themselves. It will be for your Majesty to commence a moral revo-

lution, still more glorious than the political one you have achieved, by making the Court a school of religion, morality, and decorum, and thus gradually reforming the people by the same high example that has so thoroughly corrupted them."

"And is it for the purpose of giving me all this good advice that you have solicited a private audience?" asked the King, not quite relishing the remarks he had heard.

"Not altogether, and your Majesty will perhaps smile at my lofty professions of disinterestedness, when I confess that my main object was, after all, to solicit a favour, although for another, not myself."—Forester then briefly stated the circumstances that had occasioned Walter Colyton to be cashiered, exculpated him from all participation in, or knowledge of the double-letter scheme, which he rightly assigned to the manœuvring mother, and detailing the generous conduct of the son in suffering him to escape at Hales Court, and thus saving his life at the risk of his own, he concluded by soliciting respectfully, but earnestly, that he

might be reinstated in the rank he had lost, pledging himself for his honour and loyalty.

“Enough !” said William ; “ the brave man who has saved your life, I shall ever hold to have been a benefactor to myself. Lord Dover’s troop, as you are of course aware, I have ordered to be broken ; but your friend shall have a captaincy in another regiment of cavalry, nor shall I lose sight of his future promotion.”

—The King, who was methodical in every thing, entered Walter’s name in his pocket-book ; and after telling Forester that he was glad to have had an opportunity of obliging him in this trifling matter, and would be still more so, when he should require some more important favour for himself, he bowed slightly, an understood signal that he had no more time to bestow, and the conference closed.

Next day Forester received a captain’s commission for his friend ; and concluding that he could now be spared from the Court for a few days, he determined to gratify the wish he had been ardently cherishing, by setting off immediately for Somersetshire.

CHAPTER X.

Must we part then?

What are those joys that flatter'd us but now!
In one poor minute gone; at once they wither'd,
And left their place all desolate behind them.

Lady Jane Grey.

INDESCRIBABLE was the joy of the whole family at Orchard Place, when Forester presented himself, and, after many and most cordial greetings and felicitations on both sides, announced the reinstatement of Walter in the army; a piece of intelligence so much the more unexpected, as the Squire had arrived only two days before, with the mortifying tidings of his signal discomfiture at Court, and the hopelessness of all future applications to the King.

While the rest of the family were elated at the new prospects of honourable distinction thus opened to Walter, Mrs. Colyton, adverting only to the immediate saving, exclaimed — “ Then his equipment will not be lost after all ! a cavalry regiment, you said ; every thing will do again, nothing need be bought afresh, we can alter what may be required—truly Providence is very good to us ! ” With which words she again shook Forester’s hand with renewed thanks, hurried out of the room, ordered liberal additaments to the dinner, arrayed herself in her best brocade suit, with russet shoes and silver buckles, a garb which for twenty years past had been reserved for great occasions, and, returning to the parlour, began to question her visitant very minutely about the downfall of the abdicated King, recalling how the crown had tottered on his head at the time of the coronation, and how his statue at Whitehall, as she had been given to understand, stood with its back to the palace, and its face to the river, an omen which manifestly prefigured his abdication, and the mode of his flight.

“*Mort de ma vie*, Becky! I should have thought the same,” cried the Squire, “if the statue had sneaked away by water instead of the King.”

“Jaspar, Jaspar! you are one of the scoffers, or you would see much higher authority for the late events than these human prognostics.” She then endeavoured to prove that all the recent occurrences had been clearly and incontestably shadowed forth in the book of Revelations, supporting her theory by arguments which, however plausible, we do not think it necessary to detail, inasmuch as almost every subsequent year has produced a new version of the same mysterious book, unequivocally establishing its application to passing events. Long might her dissertation have lasted, for upon these subjects she was never wanting in words, however deficient in eloquence, had not the Squire expressed his wish that she had seen the prophecy in the proper light before she dictated his unlucky letter to King James,—a remark that occasioned her to find a quick pretext for leaving the room.

Forester was struck by the alteration in Edith's appearance; as soon as the momentary flush of joy at his arrival had passed away, he noticed that she was thinner and paler than before, while the transparency of her fair skin, and the wild expression of her lambent eyes, imparted to her an appearance almost supernatural and ethereal. Delicate, however, as was her bodily health, her spirits were less dejected than formerly. Sustained by a fever, a fire of impatience to hear from Agatha, and to prevail upon her to return to Hales Court, she waited day after day in the hope of her re-appearance, and of herself being present at her marriage with Forester; after which, as she implicitly believed, her own death would not be long delayed. Eagerly and instantly did she question Forester as to the tidings he might have received from St. Germain; and most painful were the misgivings of both when they found that their various letters had all remained unanswered. Throwing aside every fastidious scruple, in the belief that she had not long to live, Edith confessed to him her accidental dis-

covery of his passion for Agatha, filled him with delight by avowing her conviction that it was fully reciprocated, and established a new claim to his gratitude by the promise of using all her interest with her friend to induce her immediate compliance with his letter, the purport of which he had made known to her. In such deeply interesting conversations, each delighting the other by their mutual eulogies of Agatha, they mostly passed the hours of Forester's stay at Orchard Place, while the rest of the party were not less absorbingly engaged in preparations for the approaching wedding of Walter and Hetty Chervil, which was shortly celebrated with becoming parade and festivity. Paul Mapletoft, glorious in a new powdered wig, his old one being half unthatched, gave the bride away, quoting from Virgil an account of a marriage feast, and favouring the bride and bridegroom with a learned dissertation on the Epithalamium of the ancients; Mrs. Colyton quoted from Scripture, and read them a lecture upon economy; the Squire, really de-

lighted because the wedding brought with it a jollification, sang Bacchanalian songs, and broached his new batch of Burgundy with prodigious glee, now and then, however, with a malicious pleasantry, provoking his wife by sly allusions to her inimitable good management in procuring the sacking of Orchard Place at the time of Monmouth's Rebellion, in securing Walter's money by sewing it in the saddle, and more especially in dictating and forwarding the two memorable letters to James and William.

Notwithstanding this raillery, the good humour of the party suffered no interruption; while at the farm of the Chervils, Hetty's nuptials were observed with a still more boisterous merriment, all the rustic neighbours having been invited to participate in a roasted ox, and two barrels of strong ale, the gift of the Squire. On this festive occasion the bride's sister, the mirthful and mischief-loving Margaret, displayed her cherry-coloured cheeks and ribbons to such advantage, and played off her airs and her practical jokes upon a tippling young farmer

with such a captivating archness, that she won his heart, and not long after accompanied him as a bride to the parish church.

Covered with benedictions by the grateful Colytons, Forester set off upon his return to London, having previously taken a most affectionate leave of Edith, and arranged with her that they should communicate together, should either of them receive a letter from Agatha. To his unspeakable delight he found one waiting for him at his lodgings in London, and tearing it eagerly open read as follows :—

“ Thank Heaven ! I have at length a respite, and as I know not how long it may last, I seize the pen, though scarcely able to hold or guide it, that I may reply to your letters, and those of my dear Edith. They were kept from me till this morning, but if I had sooner received them, I could not have sent you an earlier reply ; for I have been sadly afflicted with illness, even to the endangering of my life, and am not yet without fear of a relapse. By the unsparing application of the lancet, I am respite, I dare not say rescued ; the exhausted

state in which I am left will be sufficiently betrayed in these scarcely legible lines, traced by a trembling hand, although I only write at intervals. How unfortunate that I should have the least strength when I have the most need of it! My heart, however, is stout, and I will endeavour to account for our sickness, for we have all been invalids, before I proceed to the more important matter on which I wish to address you.

“Anxious to avoid the struggle of petty factions and angry intrigue, of which St. Germain became the focus, as soon as it had been assigned to our unfortunate King for his residence, my father was induced to hire a small chateau, prettily but most unhealthily situated, in the marshy grounds below St. Cyr. Scarcely had we settled ourselves in it, when an infectious fever, accompanied with ague, broke out in the neighbourhood, and speedily attacked every individual of our household, not even the servants escaping. My father and our good kinsman, thanks to the strength of their constitutions, soon triumphed over the malady; but

my recovery was for some time considered hopeless. Ill as I was, we abandoned our inauspicious chateau, and returned to St. Germain, the air of which, from its high and dry situation, being considered peculiarly favourable to invalids, induced my father to overlook his former objections to the town. Here we remain at present, and I have so far derived benefit from the change, that I have been allowed to read your letters and Edith's, and am permitted by my physician to write in reply, not exceeding half an hour at a time. Eagerly do I avail myself of this concession, while I am yet able, for a relapse, they tell me, would be fatal. Heaven's will be done ! Were I to judge by my own sensations, I should pronounce mine to be still a desperate case. I trust that I am prepared, and if I am indeed to die, I am sure that I shall depart in greater peace of mind after having written this letter.

“ From my heart and with my whole soul do I congratulate you on the realization of all your great and glorious hopes, and on the emancipation of our common country, a sentiment in

which my father and our worthy kinsman most cordially unite ; for though we are compelled by our proscribed faith to become exiles from our dear England, we yield to none in fervent aspirations for her freedom and happiness ; nor can I conceive a more exalted delight than that which you must now enjoy in the consciousness that your patriotism has been pure and spotless, that all its holiest wishes have been happily achieved. To your anticipations of this nature I look back with pleasure unalloyed ; but when you refer me to the few hurried sentences that passed between us previously to your escape from Hales Court, I beseech you to recollect the impossibility of my weighing words at that agitating moment—my natural anxiety not to disappoint your impassioned solicitations, when I little thought that we should ever meet again,—and the vagueness of the assurance that was extorted from my fears and sympathies, rather than from the deliberate counsel of my heart. What I then said, what I then felt, it is useless to recall : circumstances are now totally changed. The stormy tide of life has cast us upon opposite shores, and

fate seems to have decided that this separation should be permanent. For your own sake, for my sake, for the sake of another most justly dear to us both, it is best that we should meet no more! You forget, Sir, that your father has sworn never to cross the threshold of a Catholic; that he has always been among the most unsparing revilers of our faith; that recent events have only served to inflame this animosity. Would you have me enter into the family of Sir Miles, to be disowned or insulted? Think you that I would convert the domestic harmony so recently and so happily re-established, into new bitterness and dissension, or that I would expose you to the pain of being a second time alienated and disinherited? Never — never — never! Let me show my sincere, my disinterested regard for you by saving you from such painful sacrifices, not by exacting them.

“Let me, above all, be sincere with you. Even if I recover, of which I speak distrustingly—even if all the impediments I have mentioned were removed, there would still exist an

insuperable bar to our union. Forgive me for what I am about to say, opposed as it may appear to conventional usages, perhaps even to feminine delicacy, and to the confidence with which I have been entrusted. All these must yield to still more imperative considerations, for I solemnly believe that the sanity, and perhaps the life of Edith Colyton depend upon this letter, and upon the manner in which it may influence *your future conduct* ! Oh, gallant and generous Stanley Forester ! how must your thoughts and faculties have been pre-occupied by the love of your country, or by your ill-directed passion for a less worthy object, not to have perceived that you have won the heart and whole affections of Edith Colyton ! Away with all punctilious reserve when such dear interests are at stake ! Truth, truth and the happiness, the preservation of Edith before every thing ! She loves you, Sir ; she idolizes your noble character ; she doats upon you, even to distraction, for I have sate beside her till her reason has wandered in the intenseness of her anxiety for your safety, and she has burst into

tears of hysterical joy even at the sound of your name. Oh, my dear, dear Mr. Forester ! pardon the familiar earnestness of this appeal : has she not ten thousand times more claim to your affections than any other ? She it was whose exquisite senses first caught the sound of your voice in Goathurst Wood, and whose humane heart prompted her to fly through the storm to your succour ; she it was who nursed and hovered over you like a guardian angel, who proffered her own life and compromised that of her brother, to secure your escape from Hales Court ; who suggested the scheme for your deliverance from prison at Exeter, and would gladly, delightedly, have laid her own head upon the block, if thus she might have saved yours. Does not such devotedness, an attachment so fond, so brave, so self-sacrificing, deserve that you should reciprocate her affections ? You will tell me, perhaps, that you have placed them elsewhere ; that you cannot transfer them. But my death, or my inflexible rejection of your suit if I live, must alike compel you to extinguish this hopeless passion ; and it is utterly impossible for you to revert to the claims, the

virtues, the charms of the incomparable Edith Colyton, without loving her. Oh what a wonderful union of tenderness and heroism is Edith ! how gentle and generous her heart ! how fine and penetrating her intellect, unless when it is clouded by the over-sensibility of her feelings ! When I recall the exquisite organization of that beautiful creature ; how her faculties tremble and pendulate at this very moment between reason of the brightest order, and the lamentable gloom of derangement, I shudder at the consequences, should she be left to pine and wither away in disappointment. Oh ! if that loving heart were to break—if that acute mind were to sink into imbecility—if such a pure, affectionate, faultless, heavenly creature were to be driven into a premature grave !—Stanley Forester ! need I say more ? Yes, I will add, that in marrying Edith you will have the glad sanction of your father, who would never forgive you were you to espouse a Catholic ; while mine, who is unwillingly condemned to a residence in France, must not and shall not be ever abandoned by his daughter. Are not our respective paths chalked out for us with suf-

ficient clearness? Fate, filial affection, friendship, necessity itself, cry aloud to me that I must remain an exile, and reject Stanley Forester. Duty, honour, gratitude, compassion, all the considerations of propriety and of feeling, point out Edith Colyton as the wife whom Stanley Forester should select. By acting under their solemn sanctions and suggestions, you will not only secure her felicity and your own, but confirm my happiness also should I live, and entitle yourself, should I be summoned from this earthly scene, to the dying prayers and benedictions of your grateful friend,

“AGATHA SHELTON.”

Most intense and agitating were the feelings of Forester on perusing this letter. Heart-throbbing dismay at the intelligence of Agatha's illness; tender fears that her own misgivings as to a relapse might be confirmed; and the keenest pangs of disappointment at her apparent disavowal of that attachment which she had more than intimated at Hales Court, and the remembrance of which he had cherished

with such a fond and sanguine confidence, distressed his bosom by turns ; while it thrilled and melted with an undefinable feeling of affection, admiration, and surprise, as he read those glowing passages that alluded to Edith. The proud love, even of the best of men, knows not the humility, the disinterestedness, the generous votement of a woman's attachment ; it cannot exist without hope, nor can that hope be destroyed without wounding the haughty spirit that nourished it. Forester's immediate and predominant feeling, therefore, was one of vexed humiliation at Agatha's apparent denial of regard for him, and these were the passages to which he first reverted. On re-perusing them he saw that her former declaration was rather qualified than recalled ; that she did not so much retract the confession she had then made, as point out present obstacles to their union, and endeavour to substitute the heart-wounded Edith Colyton for herself. In spite of her averments, or rather of her insinuations, he flattered himself that she still regarded him with undiminished affection ; and as his self-

love recovered from the momentary shock it had received, he could the better distinguish and appreciate the generosity of that love by which others were actuated. That he should have awakened such a vehement passion in Edith filled him at first with unaffected surprise, for she had ever commended Agatha to his admiration with so fervent an eloquence, her eulogies of her friend had been so incessant and exalted, she had even expressed the delight with which she should contemplate their marriage with so much unreserve and ardour, that he entertained not the smallest suspicion as to the real state of her heart. Now, however, that the veil was withdrawn, he could recognise in a thousand little circumstances which he had formerly overlooked, a full confirmation of the passion he had so unintentionally and unhappily kindled ; and he was struck with wonder at the magnanimity of these generous women, each recommending her rival to a preference in the affections of the man to whom both were attached, both wishing to renounce him that they might sacrifice love to friendship.

Agatha, indeed, had pointed out serious objections to their union, difficulties that for the present seemed to be insuperable, and which in the impatience of his sanguine temperament he had not at first duly weighed ; while he was forced to admit that none of these obstacles opposed themselves to his marriage with Edith. So much the greater was the elevation of her soul in refusing to avail herself of the advantages she possessed over her exiled rival. She had his unbounded esteem, gratitude, admiration ; but what availed these if he had bestowed his heart upon Agatha ? The latter told him that his love for herself must inevitably be soon extinguished because it was hopeless. Might he not urge the same of Edith's misplaced and unrequited attachment ? That she might suffer for some short period was indeed to be expected, and it was agonising to think that so susceptible a creature should be doomed to the smallest laceration of her heart ; but that her reason should be unhinged, that she should pine away and sink prematurely to the grave, like a withered rose, was surely, surely the ex-

aggerated fear of friendship, rather than any sober calculation of probability. As Forester reverted, however, to the almost ethereal delicacy of her frame, and more especially to the exquisite sensitiveness of her mind, the misgiving pang that he felt seemed to refute his own mental arguings, and in order to dissipate the painful images that began to haunt his fancy, he again turned to the letter, and once more read it anxiously over. On this third perusal, the fear that Agatha might have a relapse of her dangerous illness becoming paramount in his mind, he suddenly resolved that he would travel *incognito* to St. Germain, and endeavour to persuade her father to return to England, in the hope that her native air might perfect her recovery. In a personal conference, too, he might remove many of the difficulties she had started, and at all events ascertain whether her affection really remained unabated, or whether she had been only prompted to conceal it out of regard for Edith, a point which would enable him to regulate his own future conduct. Two days elapsed before he could see the King,

and obtain his consent to the journey, an indispensable preliminary in the then critical state of public affairs, and the jealousy of all visits to St. Germain. It was granted without difficulty, and Forester was on the point of leaving London, when a packet, apparently coming from France, was put into his hands. He tore it open, and seizing one of the enclosures upon which he recognised the tremulous handwriting of Agatha, he unfolded it with a palpitating heart, and read the following disconnected, and sometimes scarcely legible sentences.

“ MY DEAR FRIEND !

“ IT is even as I suspected. I knew it, I foretold it, I felt it, although in my late letter I wished not needlessly to alarm you and our dear Edith. Spite of the assurances of my physician, I then felt upon my heart the cold shadow of death's uplifted dart, sure presage of the fatal blow that impended over me.

“ Stanley Forester ! Edith Colyton ! I have had a sudden and violent relapse, and I am dying ! I may not survive the night—they

would restrain me from writing to you, from thinking of you. Vain prohibition! Preposterous thought! Away! away! well-meaning but officious friends! seek not to deprive me of this last and dearest consolation. Last night, as they tell me, I was light-headed, and raved of your marriage. Methought, indeed, that I saw you and Edith, with the procession of your friends, Sir Miles looking the happiest of all, standing in bridal pomp beside the altar, and about to pledge those vows which will secure for ever your mutual happiness. Waking or sleeping, sane or wandering, this is my predominant wish, and I repeat it with redoubled earnestness and solemnity now that I am dying.

“Forester! you could not have the cruelty to disappoint this wish; you could not at once sadden and shorten the life of Edith, and refuse to grant the first and last request of the dying Agatha. Oh, no—no—no! it is not in your generous nature—the brave are always tender—I appeal to your heart—I appeal ————

“My strength is fast failing me—I feel a

numbness as if my limbs were already dying, and I must hasten to conclude. One of the enclosed lockets containing my hair, I will beg you to keep in remembrance of her who will probably have ceased to breathe when you shall have received it; the other, with the necklace and cross, are for our dear Edith. I charge you to deliver them to her *with your own hand*—yes, with your own hand—Remember!

“I cannot now write more, although the messenger who carries this will not depart till to-morrow. If I am then alive, I shall make some addition to my letter. Adieu! adieu! Forester! Edith! may you be happy together! A thousand blessings on you both. So prays the dying,
AGATHA SHELTON.”

Who shall describe the deep agony of Forester's soul, the sinking of his desolate heart, when he eagerly turned over the leaf, and saw no postscript, no addition of any sort to the writing! He groaned, and the paper fell from his hand; but as it dropped upon the packet, he saw and instantly snatched up a second

letter, which he tore open and devoured its contents. Alas ! it only harrowed him by adding certainty to his fears. It was from Father Bartholomew, and ran as follows :—

“ MY GOOD FRIEND,

“ THE letter forwarded to you by the last messenger from this place will have prepared you in some degree for the sad tidings which it is now my melancholy duty to communicate. The hand of affliction hath been laid upon us most heavily, and we are almost overwhelmed by the blow, but the Lord’s will be done. Amen ! Amen !

“ We have lost our dear, our incomparable daughter ! Agatha, the beautiful and the good, the most exemplary of women, the best, because the most charitable, of Christians ; Agatha, the paragon of her sex, your friend, the friend of Edith, the friend of all the world, she is taken from us, and hath winged her flight, to join her sister saints and angels in those blissful abodes where it is our consolation to hope that we may hereafter be reunited to her. After successive

fainting fits she expired in my arms about half an hour ago, invoking with her last breath benedictions upon yourself and her dear Edith, and praying for your happy union. The departure of the courier, who cannot be longer delayed, and my own distress of mind, forbid me to add more. My poor kinsman is almost inconsolable, nor can I wonder at his affliction ; but it becomes us all to bow with resignation to these inscrutable visitations of Providence, and exclaim devoutly—‘ The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away, *beatum sit nomen Domini !* Amen !

“ Accept the blessing of your friend,

“ BARTHOLOMEW SHELTON.”

Forester was a man of great fortitude, capable of enduring anything when he was supported by a sense of duty ; but in the present case, where no counteracting principle opposed itself to the indulgence of his grief, he gave way to it without restraint. His heart sickened within him at the thought that so stately, glorious, and angelic a creature as Agatha should be thus

prematurely snatched away from the earth, to the utter extinction of those sweet hopes which had formed the great recent solace of his soul. Now that his patriotic vow had been accomplished by the emancipation of his country; now that Agatha was no more, life, he feared, would remain without an object, and his bosom become a desolated void; an apprehension so withering, that as he pressed the locket to his lips in a transport of tender sadness, the tears gushed from his eyes, and fell fast upon it. The cross which he remembered to have often seen suspended from her graceful neck, renewed and embittered his anguish. “And is it possible,” he ejaculated with a shudder, “that the beautiful bosom on which I have seen this cross reposing is at this moment inanimate—that it heaves no more—nay, that now, even now while I speak, it is decomposing and relapsing into clay;—that the noble heart which that bosom enshrined, and which was as an overflowing fount of every generous virtue, is now crumbling into dust? So young, so angelic, and yet to be snatched away from the earth in the spring-time

and budding of her undeveloped glories ! Gracious Heaven ! what is life, and why should we remain in this vale of tears, if the visions that might cheer us through our weary pilgrimage are doomed to be evanescent in proportion as they are enchanting, and we are to be dazzled with the brightest hopes, only that we may be plunged into a tenfold darkness of despair ?”

Although the magnitude and the suddenness of the calamity might well excuse this momentary burst of despondency, such a feeling was not natural to Forester’s temperament ; he had too much manly fortitude to succumb, even beneath the heaviest afflictions, and he soon, therefore, gathered strength to bear up against this trying visitation. Nature generally prompts the afflicted mind to seek its own relief by busying itself in some active pursuit that may abstract it from the contemplation of its own misery, or by sharing and thus alleviating its sorrows with some sympathising friend. Both these resources presented themselves to Forester, who immediately began to make preparations for delivering the necklace and locket, according to the last injunc-

tions of Agatha, and who already learned to bear his own loss with greater resignation, as he turned his compassionate thoughts upon Edith, in the dread that her affectionate and susceptible heart might be overcome by the shock of so sudden a bereavement. Yearning with a deep and increasing tenderness towards that unhappy girl, his feelings, as he travelled, were as much awakened by pity for her, as by grief for the loss of their mutual friend ; and as any abrupt communication of the tidings he bore might derange the trembling balance of her reason, he cautiously perpended how he might best break to her the afflicting intelligence. Now, too, did he feel beforehand how peculiarly delicate would be his position with respect to her. She loved him, so Agatha had declared, with a devotedness which had been as ardent and enthusiastic as it was hopeless. What a lacerating struggle for such a gentle heart, and how magnanimous the sacrifice she had been eager to make at the certain loss of happiness, at the probable risk of reason and of life ! Even to his inmost soul did he melt with ruth as he

coupled the thought of her secret but fervent love, with the remembrance of those fond and unremitting cares to which he was indebted for his recovery ; of that heroic self-abandonment which had more than once prompted her to risk her own existence to preserve his ; and of that still more magnanimous devotedness which had incited her to prefer the happiness of her friend and unintentional rival to her own. Still the very thought of transferring his affections to her revolted him at first, as if it were an infidelity to the memory of his beloved Agatha. The latter, indeed, had urged him to it with a generous and eloquent earnestness, with the solemnity of a dying breath ; but the heart would not be so commanded ; it was autocratic, and its supremacy could neither be questioned nor directed. How he should act he knew not ; but upon one point he was decided, which was to tear himself away from Edith as quickly as possible, should he find that his bosom refused to receive her as a successor to her friend, lest by his continued presence he might be nourishing a passion he could not reciprocate. By thus

speculating upon the future, he deadened in some degree the effect of past disappointment, mitigating his grief for the loss of Agatha by suffering his sympathies to be awakened for her friend.

Of being the first to communicate the cruel bereavement they had both suffered, he was spared the pain ; for, on his arrival, he found that Father Bartholomew, at the same time that he had written to himself, had penned a few lines to Edith, simply stating the death of her friend, and urging such usual topics of Christian consolation as might best reconcile her to the calamity. Stunned by the blow, she sank into that moping melancholy state of apathy and partial derangement, to which she had before been subject, and from which nothing was capable of arousing her. Her impassive faculties seemed entirely to have lost their power : in which pitiable state she sought her former solitary haunts, wandering about " with leaden eyes that loved the ground," vacantly twitching her fingers, or muttering incoherent sentences to herself, wherein the names of Agatha and

Forester were still blended. From this distressing lethargy the sight of the latter effectually roused her. Uttering a cry of surprise and joy, as she first encountered him, she eagerly inquired the cause of his unexpected visit to Orchard Place ; and when he produced the locket, cross, and necklace which the dying Agatha had charged him to deliver to her, she burst into a transport of tears, and gave herself up to an uncontrollable passion of grief. It seemed as if the stagnated currents of feeling all rushed from her heart at once, threatening to suffocate her by their impetuous vehemence, but bringing back in their flow the suspended faculties of her mind, and presenting to Mrs. Colyton and Hetty, who were the witnesses of this affecting scene, a much less alarming appearance than the frightful torpor which they superseded.

Hour after hour, and day after day, did Edith and Forester converse together on the subject of their dear departed friend, the latter finding a still increasing delight in every new colloquy, and discovering some additional fas-

cination in Edith at every fresh interview, until the sweetness of her sorrow became more bewitching to his heart than would have been all the blandishments of joy ; while his companion, gradually dissipating her grief even by its indulgence, might be almost said to smile at it, like the monumental figure of Patience that she resembled. She seemed ever prepared to exclaim in the words of the poet—

“ Oh ! if you knew the pensive sadness
That fills my bosom when I sigh,
You would not rob me of a gladness
Monarchs are too poor to buy.”

Rapidly recovering her serenity under the healing influence of these delightful communings with the man she loved, she shook off the hypochondriacal depression which had clouded her fine faculties, and shone forth in all the radiance of intellectual light. To be pensive was natural to her ; but as she unconsciously fed the passion that was already deeply rooted in her heart, a holy and delicious calm diffused itself through her bosom, and if she might not be pronounced happy, her mind was not only

tranquillized, but occasionally visited by sweet though vague hopes, and never painfully dejected.

This mutually delightful intercourse had now been carried on for some time, and still Forester, forgetting all the sage resolutions he had formed on the journey, thought not of departing from Orchard Place? Need we explain the reason? Every one knows that pity is akin to love; and when, in addition to the deep compassion that he felt for Edith, he viewed her as his heroical preserver, and the affectionate ministrant that had watched over him so tenderly in his sickness;—when he witnessed her attractions, both personal and intellectual, as they developed themselves under the influence of renovated health and returning peace of mind; when he knew, above all, that this delicate creature was fondly, devotedly attached to him, and that any fresh disappointment might derange the whole fragile structure of her frame and mind, can we wonder that he felt himself bound by every consideration of gratitude and principle to reciprocate her affection, and that

his heart had already done so, even before he perceived these secret promptings? How subtle a casuist is the mind in reconciling our duties to our inclinations! His contemplated union with Edith, instead of its being viewed as an act of infidelity to the memory of Agatha, appeared to him now an act of obedience to her dying injunctions, which he was imperatively called upon to perform. With her expiring breath she had solemnly conveyed to him a first and last request, and every impulse of his bosom, every suggestion of his judgment, urged him to compliance. As soon as he had decided upon making a tender of his hand to Edith, he considered that the most persuasive mode of doing so would be to submit to her perusal the last letter he had received from Agatha, which obvious considerations of delicacy had hitherto induced him to withhold. This he did accordingly, when urging upon the blushing and trembling girl the solemn obligations imposed by this death-bed entreaty of their departed friend, and making an impassioned declaration of his love, he formally tendered to her his hand and heart.

Overcome with agitation, Edith, pressing the letter to her lips, and bedewing it with her tears, sobbed out the words — “ Dear, generous, noble-minded Agatha !” nor was it until some minutes had elapsed, that, in reply to the eager solicitations of her lover, she confessed she had given up to him her whole affections, and as she sank half-fainting into his arms, yielded a delighted though scarcely audible consent to his wishes.

CHAPTER XI.

(CONCLUSION.)

Lieve son al par del vento,
Vario ho il volto, il pié fugace,
Or m'adiro, e in un momento,
Or mi torno a serenar.

Il Sogno di Scipione.

Oh! when you all get wives, and such as mine,
(If such another woman can be found,)
You will rave too—dote on the dear content,
And prattle in their praise out of all bounds.
I cannot speak my bliss!—You'll pardon me,
About some twelvemonths hence I may begin
To speak plain sense.

ISABELLA.

OUT of respect to the memory of their friend, the nuptials of the happy pair were deferred for some time, and were at length celebrated in a quiet unostentatious manner. Sir Miles, who

had received some vague intimation of his son's former attachment to Agatha, and had been filled with a profound horror at the thought of his marrying a Catholic, was proportionately elated at his union with Edith Colyton; in confirmation of which friendly feeling he was not only an active participant in all the proceedings of the wedding, but made several splendid presents to the bride, and enabled his son, by a handsome addition to his income, to support his wife in a becoming style. Both families were equally gratified at the match, and the Colytons were more especially delighted when they found that the newly married couple were to reside on a small estate belonging to Sir Miles, at only a short distance from Orchard Place. Walter and Hetty were settled in the house at Bridgwater given to them by Paul Mapletoft; so that the double marriage in the family, instead of occasioning that painful domestic separation, and severing of the ties of relationship which is the frequent concomitant of these alliances, had happily collected the

parties together in the same neighbourhood, and enabled them to enjoy the pleasures of love without sacrificing those of friendship and social intercourse. Forester and Walter Colyton confirmed upon closer intimacy that mutual regard which had sprung up on a very slight acquaintance, although it had been early distinguished by reciprocal acts of generosity; their wives preserved and cemented the attachment which had subsisted from their days of childhood; and the parents on both sides, for Sir Miles lived within visiting distance, fully participated in the happiness of their offspring.

To Forester in particular, whose life for several years past had been an almost incessant struggle with difficulties of the most harassing nature, and dangers under which nothing but the most heroical and indomitable spirit of patriotism could have sustained him, the calm felicity, the even-flowing beatitude of his present existence was rendered doubly entrancing by the effect of contrast. It seemed as if he had reversed the fate of our first parent, and

after passing through the trials and ordeals of this vale of tears, had been received, even in his life-time, into a Paradise of ineffable and unfading felicity. His ardent temperament disposed him to enjoy this change with the keener relish ; and as the charms and accomplishments of Edith developed themselves in new attractions, he doated on the source of all his happiness with an almost daily increase of passionate devotement.

But what transport, what ecstasy ever equalled that of Edith, when gradually moderating her regrets for the loss of Agatha, and becoming every hour more fondly devoted to her husband, she yielded herself up to the bliss of her lot with the whole delight of a heart more exquisitely sensitive than ever throbbed even in a female bosom ! Since the painful predominate over the pleasurable emotions in this our earthly pilgrimage, it is little desirable, perhaps, that our sensations should be too keen ; but if, as the poet avers, “ an ounce of sweet is worth a pound of sour ; ” if the most sensitive

to pain are susceptible of the most intense enjoyment, we may imagine that Edith found in her present exalted felicity an overflowing recompense for all her past sufferings. Such a result might have been readily inferred even by the least attentive observer, for not only did her fine mind, freed from the hypochondriacal cloud by which it had been overshadowed, shine forth with a more electrical and penetrative power, but a rapid and marked change occurred even in her external appearance. Her countenance became more animated, a lambent lustre played about her eyes, her skin grew more transparent, a roseate hue of the most clear and brilliant dye succeeded to the paleness of her cheeks, and her beauty assumed a lucid delicate character so perfectly angelic, that it was at once delightful and fearful to gaze upon her loveliness.

Nothing occurred for some time to interrupt the flow of this Elysian tranquillity, until the sudden death of his father compelled Forester, who had now succeeded to the title, as well as to the whole of the patrimonial estates, to re-

move with Edith to the seat of his ancestors. This, as we have already intimated, being within an easy distance from Bridgwater and Orchard Place, did not threaten any interruption of the domestic and social happiness that had previously existed; but it was at his new residence, and amid the congratulations of his numerous tenantry, that Sir Stanley, in an accidental encounter with the physician who had attended the deceased Richard Colyton, had an ominous whisper poured into his ear that startled his heart with unutterable dismay. In the translucent brilliancy of Edith's complexion, in the glassy brightness of her eyes, in the clear delicate bloom that now began to assume a somewhat definite outline upon either cheek, and in the languor and exhaustion that she occasionally manifested, the physician saw but too palpable symptoms of incipient consumption, the malady which had proved fatal to her brother Richard, and was known to be inherent in the Colyton family. This apprehension, or rather conviction, he imparted to Forester, warn-

ing him that an immediate change of air was necessary, and that his best chance of preserving her would be an instant removal to the southern coast of Devonshire. With what agony of spirit the doating husband heard these tidings ; with what a withering of the heart he bore his beloved partner to the prescribed spot ; with what indefatigable tenderness he nursed and watched over her during the progress of that most insidious and distressing of all mortal maladies, we shall not attempt to describe. From narratives of woe, from scenes that only serve to lacerate the heart without any correspondent benefit, we have ever recoiled even in the perusal, and are little likely, therefore, to commit any such harrowing details to paper. Not by us shall the curtains of the last bed of sickness be ever drawn aside ; let a veil be dropped over the countenance of youth, loveliness, and innocence, as it struggles through the birth of dissolution, that it may soar to Heaven, and put on a new and more angelic beauty. Suffice it to state that inexorable

Death, who had now incontestably planted his hectic banner in the cheek of Edith, would not be defrauded of his prey ! Disease made slow but unintermitted ravages upon her attenuated frame ; in spite of every exertion of human skill, of every care lavished by the most tender affection, she finally expired in the arms of her almost heart-broken husband, and, at her own request, was buried in the same grave with the brother whom she had so affectionately loved when living, and from whom she wished not to be severed even in death.

For the reasons already assigned, we shall not endeavour to pourtray the sufferings of Forester, who, being as it were made a second time a widower within so short a space, felt as if he were now alone in the world, and had no sufficing object to fill up the void of his aching heart, or attach him to existence. In spite of all his fortitude, he sank under a blow so cruel and so unexpected ; nor was he for several months able to shake off the depression that had overwhelmed his spirits, until, at the sug-

gestion of Walter Colyton, he consented to try the effect of a change of scene, and of a revival of old associations, by visiting some of the friends and brother patriots with whom he had been connected in the perilous adventures that had immediately preceded the Revolution. In the society of his old colleague, Henry Sidney, now created Baron of Milton, and in the recollection of their mutual exploits, his wounded spirit first recovered some degree of complacency. Here, too, he encountered Admiral Herbert, whose services William had rewarded by the earldom of Torrington; Dr. Burnet, promoted on the same account to the see of Salisbury; Russel, and others of his old coadjutors, all wearing their new and blushing honours thick upon them; all deeply engaged in fresh schemes of politics and ambition; and all urging him to make his beloved country once more his mistress, to present himself at Court, and either to receive the merited distinctions which the King would be delighted to confer; or at least to prevent his mind from feeding upon its own sorrows,

by accepting some active public employment. Deaf to the former temptation, he yet listened complacently to the latter suggestion, and after having passed some time with his old associates, betook himself to London, and attended the next levee, where his reception was so cordial as to astonish the courtiers, who knew the coldness of William's ordinary manner. "If I could quarrel with you for any thing," said the monarch, after having taken Forester into his closet, "it would be for your long absence from Court. You have taken full time to consider how I may most acceptably express my sense of your distinguished services. Let me know your wishes, and I trust that you will not find me slow in gratifying them."

Thanking the King for his kind intentions, Forester declared that he must still respectfully decline all titles or honours as a remuneration for services which were abundantly repaid in the performance, but that he would gratefully receive any employment, which might assist him to dissipate his private sorrows, while he dis-

charged a public duty. William assured him that he came most opportunely, as he had been seeking some one to whom he could entrust a confidential mission to the abdicated King, of which the object was to procure from him a formal renouncement of all claims to the throne of England, either for himself or his son, and a pledge to abstain from all hostile attempts at a recovery of his power, in consideration of a large stipend from England, and of certain political and religious advantages, for which negotiations had already been opened with the Pope. "You are the most eligible negotiator I could select," said William; "for the very sight of you, by recalling to the abdicated King your past heroism, and the invincible spirit of patriotism that he must expect to encounter, should he persevere in his projects of invasion, may assist in deterring him from the attempt."

"Motives of delicacy," said Forester, "have hitherto deterred me from intruding into the presence of James Stuart, whose downfall I so

long laboured to promote ; but these must give way to more important considerations; and if by my mission I can become instrumental in preventing the threatened invasion of my native country, my exertions shall be most willingly and zealously devoted to that object."

"It is well," said the King. "Of the result of any invasion, neither you nor I can entertain the smallest fear ; but I would rather prevent a landing than repel it, especially as my present plans require that all the energies of the country should be directed towards another object. You shall have your instructions forthwith."

These were furnished on the following day, and as William knew that his father-in-law was not less passionately devoted to the pleasures of the chase than himself, he thought he could not render Forester's mission more acceptable than by sending over with him to France the whole of the ex-King's hunting establishment, including horses, dogs, and carriages of every description. These were accordingly embarked and landed at

Havre, whence Forester proceeded to St. Germain, where upon presenting his credentials, and stating the object of his mission, he soon found that he had not the smallest chance of succeeding in his object. James indeed, who considered the nomination of such a negociator as little short of a fresh insult to himself, refused even to see him ; and sending him a formal letter from his secretary acknowledging the arrival of the hunting establishment, accompanied it with passports, and an order from the French authorities commanding him to quit St. Germain in eight and forty hours, and France in four days. His stay being limited to such a short period, the unsuccessful envoy made immediate enquiries respecting Mr. Shelton, whom he was most anxious to see once more, and, if possible, to afford himself the melancholy solace of visiting Agatha's grave before he left France. Finding that the object of his enquiry resided at some little distance from St. Germain, but that he generally attended the evening service which was celebrated in the chapel of the Chateau, and was open

to the public, Forester betook himself thither in the hope of recognising his friend, and of joining him as he withdrew from the sacred building. Not only was the interior dimly lighted, but it was divided into little oratories at the sides, the inmates of which it was exceedingly difficult to distinguish. Within one of these recesses, surmounted with the royal arms of England, ostentatiously emblazoned, he could, however, discern the ex-King, whose features wore a haggard and unhappy look, and the fervent zeal of whose devotion seemed to attest that he had withdrawn his thoughts from a world wherein he had found nothing but disappointment, sorrow, and ingratitude. As Forester gazed on the monarch who had once been the terror of three potent kingdoms, now "fallen from his high estate," exiled from his family and his country, inhabiting an antique moated castle, surrounded by the shadow of a court, attended by fifteen of the French household guards, and with just sufficient state to present a meagre mockery of royalty, he could not suppress a sigh of com-

miseration for the man, however little he might regret the reverses of the monarch. This sentiment was felt with a more touching tenderness when upon singing the Latin anthem, which was from the last chapter of the Lamentations, James upturned his melancholy eyes to Heaven, uttered a sigh, and plaintively exclaimed with the choristers—"Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us; consider and behold our reproach. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens."

Reverting, however, to that which was of more immediate concernment to his heart, Forester looked anxiously around him in the hope of discovering Mr. Shelton: his scrutiny was vain; and the service was drawing towards a conclusion, when he was startled by a faint cry proceeding from one of the oratories on his left, whence there presently issued two gentlemen supporting a female in a state of apparent insensibility. Others hastening to offer their assistance, they bore the suffering lady to the Porch, whither Forester eagerly followed, for

in one of the supporters he had immediately recognised Mr. Shelton. Attendants hurried to the spot with candles, and as Forester looked down over their stooping heads upon the object of their solicitude, what was his unutterable and astounding amazement at beholding the features of Agatha Shelton, pale indeed, much altered and sadly attenuated, but still beyond all possibility of doubt the features of that identical Agatha, whom he had loved with so much ardour, and whose imagined death he had regretted with such a deep and enduring sorrow. For a while he stood transfixed, afraid to trust the evidence of his own senses, but in another moment vehemently thrusting aside the bystanders, he threw himself upon his knees with an air of distraction, passionately called upon his beloved Agatha by name, and as he hung over her with a mingled look of rapture, astonishment and anxiety, pressed her to his throbbing heart. The tender, the soul-subduing scene that followed as Agatha slowly recovered her consciousness, it is utterly beyond

our power to pourtray. Mr. Shelton's carriage, which was in attendance, conveyed the party to the house of his kinsman, where in the blushing confessions which Forester subsequently drew from Agatha herself, or in the explanations which he gathered from her friends, he was enabled to solve the apparent miracle of her resuscitation.

Really believing herself to be dying at the time she had written her last letter, she had strictly enjoined Forester to deliver the locket and cross to Edith with his own hands, in the hope that an interview with her love-stricken friend, and the renewed intimacy that it would probably occasion, might eventually secure the happiness of both parties by their marriage. When Father Bartholomew dispatched his letter, Agatha had fallen, after repeated fainting fits, into a trance, which was mistaken for death; and although, shortly after the departure of the messenger, her suspended animation, to the inexpressible joy of her friends, was restored, she resolutely insisted that neither Edith nor

Forester should be undeceived, a concealment which on every account became more imperatively necessary when she subsequently learned that her generous scheme of self-sacrifice had succeeded, and that their union had been accomplished. By this heroic devotement she had indeed saved Edith from the miseries of disappointed love, she had preserved her friend's wavering reason, she had prolonged her life, she had conferred supreme happiness both upon her and upon Forester; but she had overrated the strength of her own mind, and in the struggle to tear up by the roots the passion that had entwined itself with every fibre of her heart, her health and peace had miserably suffered. The death of Edith, the knowledge of which event did not reach her until some time after its occurrence, distressed her for the loss of her friend, while it agitated her with vague and remote hopes, which became still more painfully prevalent in her bosom when she learnt the decease of Sir Miles. Still, however, the sentiment of a truly feminine and refined delicacy prescrib-

ed that her existence should remain a secret to Forester, and thus she had continued nourishing a concealed yearning, under which her health declined and her form wasted away, until she had suddenly beheld the object of all her thoughts and aspirations in the chapel, and in the surprise of her feelings, had uttered an irrepressible cry of joy, and sunk insensible into the arms of her father.

It is not our intention to dwell unnecessarily upon the details of a denouement which, having now become sufficiently apparent to our readers, would only occupy their time without stimulating their curiosity. If Forester still nourished in his heart the seeds of his original passion for Agatha, it may be imagined with what energy and rapidity they developed themselves upon his learning the magnanimous sacrifice to which she had been impelled by a double consideration for the welfare and happiness of himself and Edith. In the hurried but most tender and affecting interviews which his short stay at St. Germain allowed him to enjoy,

he obtained her willing consent to their ultimate marriage, with a pledge that they would speedily follow him to England. To this measure many concurring motives now influenced Mr. Shelton. He had quitted his native country partly from the fear of persecution and confiscation, partly out of respect to his unhappy Sovereign : but circumstances were now materially altered ; the subsidence of the anti-Popery mania with which the whole realm had been insanified, afforded him a certainty that he might return to dwell at Hales Court without molestation, the Government was now vested in William and Mary by a solemn act of the Legislature, and however he might compassionate James he had never admired him as a Sovereign, and utterly condemned his project for involving England in the horrors of a civil war by invading her with foreign troops. Disgusted, moreover, with the bitterness and animosity which had sprung up among the different factions of the little Court at St. Germain, he willingly turned his back upon the city, set foot once

more upon his native soil, and took up his residence at Hales Court.

Amid a large circle of delighted friends was the marriage of Forester and Agatha celebrated at the mansion of the former ; nor can we convey a more exalted idea of the felicity that he enjoyed in his second union, than by stating that it even exceeded the beatitude of his first, since, as the health and beauty of his beloved bride became gradually restored, he had assurance, in the renovated strength of her constitution, that he might reasonably calculate on a protracted continuance of his present happiness. In nothing were his hopes disappointed, and never had the nuptial promise of uninterrupted joy been more abundantly confirmed. Contrary to the sapient predictions of Mrs. Colyton, the difference of their religious faith never created the smallest diminution of their mutual respect ; for as they thought with St. Paul, that “ the letter killeth, while the spirit giveth life,” they attached little importance to minute distinctions, content to agree together in that enlarged view

of Christianity, which teaches us to show our love to God by loving one another, and which deserves not the name of religion, unless where it inspires feelings of charity, toleration, and brotherly affection towards all the children of our common Father.

THE END.

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